SEVERAL LETTERS TO THE Rev^d. Mr. JACKSON,

FROM

WILLIAM DUDGEON a Gentleman in *Berwickſhire.*

With Mr. JACKSON's

ANSWERS to Them.

CONCERNING

The Immenſity and Unity of GOD; The Exiſtence of material and ſpiritual Subſtance; GOD's moral Government of the World; The Nature of Neceſſity and Fate, and of Liberty of Action: and the Foundation, Diſtinction, and Conſequences of Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil.

WRITTEN

In the Years 1735 and 1736; and occaſioned by Two Books written by Mr. JACKSON,

ONE Entituled

The Exiſtence and Unity of God proved from his Nature and Attributes.

The OTHER being the *Defence* of it.

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SEVERAL LETTERS TO THE Rev. Mr. JACKSON, &c.

LETTER I.

Reverend SIR,

I Have read your very ingenious Vindications of Dr. *Clarke*'s Demonſtration of the Being and Attributes of God, and it ſeems needleſs to make an Apology for offering Objections to an Author's Principles which he is willing to have cleared of all Difficulties.

After I have, Sir, with my utmoſt Attention, conſidered that great good Man's Arguments, and Your's brought to prove the *neceſſary Exiſtence* of God, his *Eternity*, *Immenſity*, and *Unity*, they appear to me concluſive.

Granting then the Exiſtence of one Eternal, Immenſe Being, I do not underſtand what can be meant by, *his Power being exerted ad Extra?* frequently ſuppoſed and reaſoned from both in *Exiſtence and Unity*, p. 33, 34, &c. and *Defence of it*, p. 142, 143, &c. A Power exerted either from Eternity or in Time, *ad extra*, with Reſpect to the *Immenſe* Being, is impoſſible to conceive: It

is a ſuppoſing him Immenſe and not Immenſe at the ſame Time, which is an expreſs Contradiction. And to ſuppoſe, that Things may exiſt, in Conſequence of this Exertion of Power, *ad extra*, while nothing can be ſuppoſed to exiſt externally to the *Immenſe* Subſtance, is again a Contradiction in Terms. All Reaſonings, therefore, and Opinions built upon that impoſſible and contradictory Suppoſition of God's exerting his Power, *ad extra*, are chimerical and groundleſs, if his Immenſity is demonſtrated.

You ſeem, Sir, to be ſenſible of the Abſurdity of ſuppoſing the Exiſtence of other Subſtances, beſides the Immenſe Subſtance, (though it is always ſuppoſed and reaſoned from in your Books, p. 179 of Defence and other Places) Wherefore you ſay, Exiſtence and Unity, p. 151. *That the Divine Omnipreſence comprehends, pervades, and fills all Things*, which Expreſſion can imply no more than, That one only immenſe Subſtance or Being exiſts, or that God is *Omnipreſent*.

More, Sir, might be ſaid in Support of the above Reaſoning, and in Conſequence of it; But this would too much ſwell a private Epiſtle, and perhaps theſe Subjects are more proper for the Converſation of contemplative Men, than for a publick Controverſy. I would be glad, however, to know how far theſe few ſhort Obſervations upon your Reaſoning in your two Vindications are juſt or not? And as it is natural for knowing Men to be communicative, I expect it from you. I am with Truth and great Eſteem,

Reverend Sir,

Your moſt humble Servant.

December 25. 1735.

ANSWER

ANSWER to LETTER I.

SIR, *January* 19. 173$\frac{5}{6}$.

I Received the Favour of your Letter of the 25th of *December*; and to the Difficulty which you propoſe, anſwer, *viz.* The only true Meaning of God exerting Power *ad extra*, (which is mentioned p. 143. of the Defence of the Proof of the Exiſtence and Unity of God, and muſt not be too rigorouſly taken) is the Exertion of Power in the Production or Government of Things of *extraneous* Eſſence and Subſtance, or ſuch as are not his Subſtance, and whoſe Exiſtence is in Space, and comprehended by the immenſe omnipreſent Subſtance of God. The Subſtance of God comprehending all Things, does not exclude the Exiſtence of Things comprehended by it, or make them to be his Subſtance: Nor does the Nature of one immenſe Being exclude the Poſſibility of the Exiſtence of other Beings, whether finite or infinite; but only of another immenſe Being of the ſame Kind, which is one Demonſtration of the *Unity* of God.

I am glad you have found any Satisfaction in the Reaſonings of my Books for the *Exiſtence* and *Unity* of God, and hope, that what I have here offered may be equally ſatisfactory.

I am ſincerely

Your humble Servant.

Poſtſcript. External Exiſtence in the Argument before us is only oppoſed to the *internal* Exiſtence of the *Attributes* of God; and therefore, only means *diſtinct* Exiſtence, or the Exiſtence of Beings diſtinct from God.

LET-

LETTER II.

Reverend SIR,

I Am favoured with Your's of the 19th of *January*; and if any Thing ſatisfactory can be ſaid on the Argument before us, I expect it from you, who have written with the greateſt Clearneſs and Strength of the *Exiſtence* and *Unity* of God. But after all your very ingenious Reaſoning on this Subject, yet, *The Exertion of God's Power in the Production or Government of Things of extraneous Eſſence and Subſtance, or ſuch as are not his Subſtance,* (i. e. *Things which have a diſtinct Exiſtence*) ſeems to me to be impoſſible; there being neither *Place* for his Exertion of Power, nor their Exiſtence. Exertion of Power hath a neceſſary Relation to particular Place, Time, Motion, Change; all which Ideas are contradictory to our Ideas of an *Immenſe Subſtance.* Creation, Production, or Government of Things *ab extra*, or *ad intra*, are therefore contradictory to the Nature of an eternal, unchangeable, immenſe Subſtance or Being.

But ſuppoſing the Exiſtence of other Subſtances, in Conſequence of God's Exertion of Power, to be *poſſible*, yet the immenſe Subſtance cannot comprehend another Subſtance of different Kind, unleſs it hath *Vacuity* in it, equal to the *real Dimenſions* of the comprehended Subſtance, which is a ſuppoſing it immenſe and not immenſe at the ſame Time, an expreſs Contradiction.

But if it be ſaid that the divine Subſtance penetrates or pervades the Subſtances comprehended by it, and that yet the Penetration is not *mutual*: This is attempting to defend one Impoſſibility by aſſerting

aſſerting another: or elſe we muſt ſuppoſe that the one hath *no real Dimenſions* (as is alledged, Exiſtence and Unity, p. 91.) and conſequently is no real diſtinct Subſtance and Exiſtence: Wherefore if the divine Immenſity is demonſtrated (as I think it is by you) no other Subſtance exiſts.

If you allow this Reaſoning juſt, one of your Diſcernment will eaſily ſee the Conſequences, and they appear not unworthy of your Conſideration. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your obliged humble Servant.

February 10. 1736.

ANSWER

Answer to LETTER II.

Sir, *February* 23. 173⅝.

IN Anſwer to the Favour of your's of the 10th of *February*, you have my Thoughts as follow, *viz.*

That ſomething exiſts, (whether Subſtance or Property) which is not the immenſe Subſtance of God, or any Property of it, is ſelf-evident: Nothing (neither Subſtance or Property) can exiſt without the Preſuppoſition of the Exiſtence of Space; But *Production* does not neceſſarily preſuppoſe *particular* Place, Time, or Motion, or Change; and mere Properties without Subſtance are nothing but abſtract Ideas: So far as they are real, they are particular Conceptions of a real exiſtent Subſtance; and to ſuppoſe them real Exiſtents themſelves without Subſtance, is to ſuppoſe every individual Thing, material or immaterial, to be, not one, but many diſtinct Exiſtents, ſubſiſting together, without any conceiveable Connection with or Dependence on each other, which is greatly abſurd.

That God exiſts and is immenſe in his Subſtance, you allow to be demonſtrated; and ſince it is ſelf-evident, that there are other Exiſtents, their Place of Exiſtence muſt be the divine Immenſity or Space, which cannot exclude ſolid Exiſtents, unleſs itſelf be ſolid, which Motion demonſtrates it not to be: nor unſolid Exiſtents, unleſs they are of the ſame Kind, and coincided with it by *Uniformity* of Exiſtence. Whence on the one hand, two immenſe *neceſſarily exiſtent* Subſtances, I take to be a plain Contradiction; but not two immenſe Subſtances of *different* Kinds,

Kinds, which cannot coincide, or mutually, *uniformly*, and *ſimilarly* penetrate or comprehend each other; by the Suppoſition of their being different in Kind: And on the other Hand, Exertion of Power, by no means ſuppoſeth (as you think) Place diſtinct from the Place of the exiſtent Subſtance exerting the Power, nor has a neceſſary Relation to particular *Place*, *Motion*, &c. This cannot rationally be thought in Reſpect of the Exertion of God's Power. When the Human Mind exerts Power, as by Volition, Reflection, *&c.* The Exertion of theſe Powers ſuppoſes no Place, but that of the intellectual Subſtance: Power is exerted *in* the Mind itſelf. So God's Power is not exerted extraneous to his Subſtance, it exiſts and is exerted *in* his Subſtance, not *out* of it, whatever is the Effect or Production of that Exertion. You might as well argue, that the Exiſtence of God's Subſtance hath a neceſſary Relation to particular Place, Time, Motion, *&c.* as that the Exertion of his Power has.

There is then no Abſurdity in ſuppoſing that God is, as ſome Antients expreſs it, Locus Omnium. That *in him we live, move, and have our Being*, literally and philoſophically, as well as in a moral or religious Senſe. Nor can I eaſily conceive different Kinds of Extenſion, as I can of Subſtance or Exiſtence. If finite changeable Subſtance exiſts not, or is annihilated, I cannot conceive Extenſion or Space to be annihilated, or to be more or leſs, than it neceſſarily is: Nor does Extenſion ſeem to be capable of Bounds, as Subſtance and Properties, not neceſſarily exiſtent, evidently are. The Exiſtence of Subſtance ſuppoſes Extenſion and Space, but whether the Dimenſions of finite mutable Exiſtents are diſtinct

from Space itſelf, is, it muſt be owned, a great Difficulty: And for which, I think, we want Ideas clearly and fully to conceive. I have therefore nothing to add to *Exiſtence and Unity*, p. 91. to which you refer, but only, that if Extenſion diſtinct from Space does exiſt, and belong to other Exiſtents, (as for ought I know it poſſibly may) it is eſſentially diſtinct in Kind from Space, as being ſolid and moveable, which is alſo the Reaſon of its being an Object of our Senſes: But of this I would not determine one way or other, and you muſt judge for yourſelf upon a cloſe Attention to the Point. But I do not at all ſee the Conſequence of Space, or the Immenſity of God's Subſtance, excluding the Exiſtence of all other Subſtances. Every Exiſtent muſt exiſt *in Space*, whether it hath Dimenſions diſtinct from Space or not: And it does not appear to me, that God's Immenſe Subſtance muſt neceſſarily exclude the Exiſtence of all other Subſtance, any more, than that the Immenſity or Infinity of his Properties, as *Power*, *Knowledge*, &c. muſt neceſſarily exclude the Exiſtence of other finite Properties. And ſince Properties without Subſtance are nothing but abſtract Ideas, you may conſider the Conſequences of your own Reaſoning, or whether it does not infer the Impoſſibility of any Exiſtence but God, which is a ſelf-evident Abſurdity.

I am

Your ſincere humble Servant.

P. S. No Thing, no Being, Subſtance, or Property, can be conceived to exiſt, without the Preſuppoſition of *Space* or the Immenſity of God's Subſtance; ſo far is *Space* or the divine Immenſity from excluding the Exiſtence of other Beings.

LET-

LETTER III.

Reverend SIR,

I Received the Favour of your's of *February* 23. In it you begin, *That ſomething exiſts (whether Subſtance or Property) which is not the immenſe Subſtance of God, or any Property of it, is ſelf-evident.* This I take to be the Point yet to be proved. I can eaſily conceive that the Idea of an immenſe or infinite Subſtance includes the Idea of infinite Power to ſupport infinite Modes, inhering in it; but that after the Exiſtence of one immenſe Subſtance or Being is demonſtrated, there ſhould yet be ſuppoſed other Subſtances, finite or infinite, of different Kind, to exiſt, appears to me an abſolute Impoſſibility. *The divine Power exerted in producing them,* you ſay, *exiſts, and is exerted in his Subſtance, and the Subſtances produced exiſt alſo in his Subſtance, but cannot coincide or mutually penetrate or comprehend each other; by the Suppoſition of their being different in Kind:* This, in both Letters you obliged me with, you inſiſt upon, and alſo in *Defence of Exiſtence and Unity,* p. 179. But this Suppoſition of the Being of *different* Subſtances itſelf, is what I contend to be *impoſſible:* Agreeable to which you ſay (in the ſame Page of the ſaid Book) though not to what you ſaid above, *That one Being can no more have the ſame Preſence than the ſame Exiſtence, or than it can be the ſame Being with another.* Now the divine Subſtance being Omnipreſent, either it hath *the ſame Preſence* with your different Subſtances, which you own to be, as indeed it is, impoſſible; or elſe they have *no Preſence at all*; and conſequently no diſtinct Exiſtence or Subſtance.

How you can conceive an immenſe Subſtance to *comprehend* another or different Subſtance, I know not; but as I can frame no Idea of this, it is an impoſſible Suppoſition to me: and on the contrary it is evident, that any comprehending Subſtance muſt have *Vacuity* in it, equal to the *real Dimenſions* of the comprehended Subſtance or Subſtances; which to ſuppoſe of the immenſe Subſtance is a plain Contradiction: and a finite Subſtance of no Dimenſions is an Abſurdity.

The Conſequence of my Reaſoning, you think, may *infer the Impoſſibility of any Exiſtence but of God*, which you call an evident Abſurdity: If by *Exiſtence* you mean *Subſtance*, I own it, and that he is *all in all*, and the Abſurdity appears to lie in the contrary Suppoſition. But if by Exiſtence, you mean Things immediately dependent upon, ſupported and comprehended by, the immenſe All-powerful Subſtance or Being, it does not, nor do I intend it ſhould, infer any ſuch Concluſion.

As to your Diſtinction of Exiſtents or Subſtances into *ſolid* and *unſolid*, I have no ſort of Idea of either of them. Solid and unſolid are Ideas only exiſting in the Mind, and being mere Ideas, cannot be called Properties of any Subſtance. One Thing or Idea is ſaid to be ſolid or unſolid, in Reſpect of others, but abſolute Solidity is what you call an *abſtract Idea*, and Unſolidity is the bare Negation of it; and ſo are neither of them Properties of any Being.

From my own Exiſtence, I infer the Exiſtence of a Being, upon which I *depend*, who affects me with Ideas, attended either with Pleaſure or Pain, independently of my Will. *Intelligence* and *Will*, I infer, by what I experience in myſelf,

to

to be the Properties of that Being, which either muſt be the ſelf-exiſtent Being, or muſt depend upon ſome other, till by neceſſary Deductions of Reaſon, we come to the ſelf-exiſtent Being, who, as he exiſts by a *Neceſſity* of *Nature*, muſt exiſt *always* and *every where*. Intelligence and Will, as they are Properties of the One, Eternal, Infinite Being, have no Relation to particular Place, Time, *&c.* But for Volitions, Reflections, *&c.* they have a neceſſary Relation to *particular Time* at leaſt: Production of Subſtances, in Conſequence of Exertion of Power, muſt *be*, and they muſt exiſt, in ſome particular Place, in all Place, or no Place; which Suppoſitions are all equally impoſſible: The firſt two being contradictory to the divine Immenſity, and the laſt contradictory in itſelf.

This Production muſt alſo have a neceſſary Relation to particular Time, for to ſuppoſe an *eternal* Thing *produced*, is a Contradiction in Terms: And whether you can ſuppoſe Production, without including in that Idea, at the ſame Time, a certain Degree of Motion and *Change*, you know beſt, I cannot conceive of it otherwiſe.

Upon the whole, as the Exiſtence of different Subſtances is *impoſſible*, ſo neither do I ſee the Suppoſition of them *needful*; the One Infinite, Eternal Intelligent Subſtance being *All-ſufficient*, *by which all Things conſiſt*, *and in which all Things have their Being*, whoſe Exiſtence, (if that was poſſible to be ſuppoſed) being *taken away*, all Things would fall to nothing. I am ſincerely,

Reverend Sir,

Your very much obliged humble Servant.

March 16. 1736.

P. S. If

P. S. If it be aſked, what is meant by the Term *I*, does it not denote a *diſtinct Subſtance?* The Anſwer is, That the Term *I* denotes a very ſimple Thing, which cannot be properly, or in Truth, called a *diſtinct* Subſtance; for when I conſider what *I am*, I find that I have ſuch a neceſſary Relation to, and Dependence on many Things in Nature; Nature itſelf, univerſal Mind or *God*, that if his Power which ſupports all Things was ſuſpended, I would ceaſe to exiſt, the Suſpenſion of God's Power being a Contradiction to Neceſſity of Exiſtence. Hence the Eternity of all dependent Things is evident.

To conclude this long Letter and Poſtſcript, Neither Senſe nor Reaſon informs me of any other Exiſtents, than that of the One, Only, Immenſe Subſtance, or *univerſal Mind*, *finite Intelligences*, dependent upon, and ſupported by Him, and *Ideas*. The chimerical Diſtinction of Subſtances into *Spiritual* and *Material*, hath confounded all the Reaſonings on metaphyſical Subjects, and filled Natural Philoſophy with Paradoxes and Contradictions, ſuch as The Exiſtence and Motion of Subſtances in Subſtances, The infinite Diviſibility of finite Extenſion, *&c.*

ANSWER

Answer to LETTER III.

Sir, *March* 31. 1736.

I Received the Favour of yours of the 16th Inſtant; in which you firſt ſay, That what I called Self-evident, *viz. That ſomething exiſts (whether Subſtance or Property) which is not the immenſe Subſtance of God or any Property of it*, is the Point to be proved: But afterwards you confeſs, that you *yourſelf* exiſt, which is owning that ſelf-evident, which I ſaid, was ſo: Your own Exiſtence, which is diſtinct from God's, muſt be either Subſtance or Property; and yet neither God's Subſtance or any Property of it.

All the Reaſon you have to conclude againſt all Subſtance but God's, is, That there is no *Vacuity* in it to comprehend any other: But finite Exiſtents, and Motion of Exiſtents are ſo far from being incompatible with the Immenſity of the divine Subſtance or Space, that they cannot be conceived, without the Preſuppoſition of it; and are only excluded by the Immenſity of the ſame ſpecifick Subſtance, or by ſolid or reſiſting Subſtance: and Vacuity has only a Relation of Contrariety to *ſolid* or *reſiſting* Subſtance, but not to Space, which in common Speech, even among Philoſophers, is called *Vacuity*, and this is the Vacuity in which finite and moving Subſtances are comprehended and move. Suppoſing Motion (which it is hard to deny or doubt of) Space is pre-requiſite for the Things moved; and no Motion is conceivable but of *Subſtance*; and nothing hinders or ſtops Motion, but *ſolid* or *reſiſting* Subſtance: And hence ariſeth the Idea of Subſtance and Solidity, both which are real.

If

If Modes or Properties exiſt, they muſt exiſt *ſome where*, and in ſome Subject; they are only abſtract Ideas when conſidered without Subſtance; but abſtract Ideas ſuppoſe a Mind or intelligent Subſtance in which they are formed. And it appears ſtrange to me that you ſhould ſuppoſe a Subject or Subſtance of the divine Properties to be neceſſary; and yet that it ſhould be neceſſary that all finite or produced Properties ſhould exiſt without a Subject or Subſtance of which they are Properties.

You ſay, you have no Idea of real Solidity: I cannot but think you have an Idea of it, when you conſider what it is which ſtops Motion, or retards, or reſiſts it; or which hinders one thing from penetrating another.

As to the Dimenſions of Subſtance diſtinct from Space, I own I am doubtful; but inclined to think, there is *ſolid moveable Extenſion*, or extended ſolid Exiſtents diſtinct from Space.

God's *Preſence*, I think, excludes the Preſence of nothing, which has not the *ſame Preſence* or Mode of Exiſtence: And I do not know how you can conceive Modes or Properties, without ſome Kind of *Preſence* belonging to them: Whatever we are, ſurely we act and move in Space, and ſo are preſent in it.

I do not underſtand what you mean by *Volitions*, *Reflections*, &c. as diſtinct in God from the Properties of *Intelligence* and *Will*. God undoubtedly *reflects* or *underſtands* and *wills* eternally: No Beginning of his Volition or Willing, or of his Reflection or Intelligence is conceivable or poſſible, and ſo he may have and probably hath produced Things *eternally*.

An eternal *Production*, which you think, is a Contradiction in Terms, is, I think, as eaſy to conceive as eternal *Power*, *Agency*, or *Will*; and

an the denying the Poſſibility of it, is attended with great and manifeſt Abſurdities. This Point I have largely conſidered in the *Defence of the Exiſtence and Unity*, &c.

I cannot conceive any *Motion* or *Change* in the Production of Things, whether Modes, or Subſtance; God himſelf is incapable of both; and mere Production implies neither in the Things produced. In your Poſtſcript, if I underſtand you, you hold an *Eternity of dependent Things to be evident*, which a little before you called a Contradiction in Terms; and you conclude it from the *neceſſary Exertion* of God's Power, which I do not underſtand, or it appears to me greatly abſurd. God undoubtedly by his *Will*, can ſuſpend his *Power* or Agency; therefore what you ſay of the Suſpenſion of God's Power being a Contradiction to Neceſſity of Exiſtence, wants to be explained.

Laſtly; God cannot poſſibly be a material or ſolid Subſtance, and we mean by *Spiritual*, what is not material or ſolid, ſuch a Diſtinction is, I think, proper; and what Idea you have of the Exiſtence and Motion of Modes and Properties exiſting *alone*, and *no where* or not in Space, I know not; or why the infinite Intelligence of God ſhould not exclude finite Intelligence, as well as his infinite Subſtance exclude finite Subſtance, I know not: And the Difficulty of the infinite Diviſibility of finite Extenſion is exactly the ſame, whether any Subſtance but God exiſts or not, *viz.* as it belongs to any conceived finite Part of Space.

I am

Your ſincere humble Servant.

LETTER IV.

Reverend Sir,

THE Favour of your's of the laſt of *March* I have. One's own Exiſtence is the firſt Part of Knowledge. His *doubting* of the Exiſtence of all other Things, makes him *perceive* his own Exiſtence or Thinking, which cannot be abſtracted one from the other. *I confeſs my own Exiſtence*, moſt certain, but that *I*, a *diſtinct Subſtance* exiſt, I never ſaid. On the contrary I ſaid, that I immediately depend upon, and am ſupported and comprehended by the All-powerful, Omnipreſent Subſtance of God; which is conſiſtent with the Exiſtence of one only Subſtance, and every Thing's being *Modifications* of his Eſſence, the neceſſary Conſequences of the Proofs for the *Immenſity* of God. Eternity, Immenſity, Power, Intelligence, are Properties of God; and you own, *Exiſtence and Unity*, p. 80, 81. *Qualities or Properties inhering in one another, or Properties of Properties*, and *That Space and Time are Properties of God only*, nay, are his *individual Immenſity and Duration:* As to what follows of *contingent Exiſtences* finite or infinite, I know not what you mean by them. I ſee no Room for their Suppoſition in a Scheme where Intelligence and Deſign take Place. *The finite Continuance or Time of every Thing, is their Exiſtence in particular Portions of God's Duration*, you ſay in the ſame Page. Now may not their finite Exiſtence itſelf, be as well particular *Portions* of God's Immenſity or Subſtance, and their finite Intelligence particular *Portions* of God's Intelligence, or, to uſe another Expreſſion of yours, *Defence*, p. 65. *particular*

cular Conceptions of his Being, or *different Modes of Apprehenſion*: By Volitions, Reflections, *&c.* I mean, Therefore Modes of Intelligence or partial Conceptions of it.

As to *Space, its being in common Speech and even by Philoſophers called a* Vacuity, it is not to the Purpoſe; and I would have thought, that the ingenious Mr. *Jackſon* would not have followed either the vulgar or learned Opinion in this, after he hath demonſtrated, That the divine Subſtance *fills all Space*, which cannot then be a *Vacuity*, for finite Subſtances to be comprehended, or to move in.

Whatever therefore is conceived to exiſt in this immenſe Subſtance, muſt be Properties of it, or partial Conceptions of its Being. The relative Ideas of Motion and Reſiſtance, Solidity and Unſolidity, are excited in me; but that a merely *inert Subſtance*, ſuch as Matter is imagined to be, ſhould be the Cauſe of theſe Ideas, is a plain Contradiction, to its *Inactivity*; nor can I from theſe Ideas infer any other Exiſtence, but that of the *univerſal Cauſe* or Mind, who ſtands in no Need of Second Cauſes, Inſtruments, and Occaſions.

You have made ſeveral Suppoſitions about abſolute Motion, *&c.* in your Books, which depend upon the *Doctrine of Abſtraction*, which make ſome think, that they have Ideas, when indeed they have none, but are making impoſſible Suppoſitions; which I might ſhew, had I now Leiſure from the neceſſary Avocations of a Huſband-man.

Two or more Beings of the *ſame Preſence*, is a contradictory Suppoſition: it is ſuppoſing them *different* Beings, while they are the *ſame* Being.

That ſomething exiſts, is evident *a Poſteriori*; and that one eternal immenſe Subſtance exiſts, is demonſtrable *a Priori*; Therefore as two or more Beings can no more have the ſame Preſence than the ſame Exiſtence, no other Subſtance exiſts, but the *One*, *Eternal*, *Immenſe*, *Intelligent Subſtance or Being*, and all Things are *Modes*, or *partial Conceptions* of his Exiſtence or Eſſence. This I take to be ſtrict Demonſtration, or elſe I know not what is. *Space* being God's *individual Immenſity or Preſence*, *WE* are therefore *partial Conceptions* of his Preſence and Subſtance, or elſe you muſt ſuppoſe, that we have a *diſtinct Preſence* or *Exiſtence*. In a Part of Space, a mere Vacuity, *where God is not preſent*; and what are the Conſequences of this Suppoſition, I need not ſay——.

One only eternal, immenſe, all-powerful, intelligent Being or Subſtance exiſting, and all Things being *Modifications* of his Eſſence; all Volitions, Reflections, *&c.* I own with you, are therefore not Properties *diſtinct* from the Properties of the infinite, eternal *Intelligence* and *Will*, &c. of God, but *partial Conceptions* of them. An eternal Exertion of Power in producing Subſtances, is, I think, a very improper Expreſſion, and not leſs indeed, than a Contradiction in Terms; a ſuppoſing that Things *were produced*, which *exiſted eternally*, and ſo were never produced. And to ſuppoſe the Exiſtence of *eternal* Power, poſſibly to be exerted only in a *finite* determinate Time, involves, as you ſay, ſeveral Abſurdities: Therefore God's Power, which ſupports all Things, exiſted eternally, and will exiſt eternally, as his infinite Subſtance, which includes that Property, is *ſelf-exiſtent*: The *Exertion* and *Suſpenſion* of God's Power in a particular Time, are therefore Contra-

Contradictions to neceſſary Exiſtence; and an eternal Creation or Production is no Creation at all.

The Exiſtence and Motion of Subſtances in Subſtances (which muſt be, if other Subſtances exiſt and move in the divine Subſtance) is as evident an Abſurdity as *Tranſubſtantiation* itſelf; and truly I do not ſee but that Chriſt may as well be *really preſent* in a *Wafer*, as God may be in any *other Subſtance*. The infinite Diviſibility of finite Extenſion, which I tranſiently mentioned in my laſt, is not only a Difficulty, as you call it, but an expreſs Contradiction; a ſuppoſing a *Part* of Extenſion *finite* and *infinite* at the ſame Time: But this Tenet and many more are founded upon the Doctrine of Abſtraction, or *the Art of fancying impoſſible Suppoſitions*. I am ſincerely and reſpectfully,

Reverend Sir,

Your moſt humble Servant.

April 10. 1736.

P. S. Neceſſity is the Foundation of Exiſtence both of the divine Subſtance and all the Attributes, Dr. *Clarke's* Anſwer to a 7th Letter. To talk then of *arbitrary Exertions of God's Power*, and all its *Conſequences*, as the Dr. does (Prop. 9 and 10 of his *Demonſtration of the Being and Attributes of God*) in Contradiction to a *natural Neceſſity*, while a *Neceſſity* of *Fitneſs* he owns, is unintelligible to me; for this Neceſſity of Fitneſs is *founded in Nature*, and therefore is a *natural Neceſſity*, and according to him, *antecedent to the Will of God, and is the Reaſon or Cauſe of his willing ſo and ſo.*

Answer to LETTER IV.

Sir, *April* 24. 1736.

I Received the Favour of your's, dated the 10th Inſtant. And now that I underſtand your Notion, I have nothing more to do, than to endeavour to ſhew you what appears to me, to be the great and evident Abſurdities of it.

You expreſs it thus, "Two or more Beings "of the ſame Preſence is a Contradiction—— "That ſomething exiſts, is evident *a Poſteriori*, "and that one eternal, immenſe Subſtance exiſts, "is demonſtrable *a Priori*: Therefore as two or "more Beings can no more have the ſame Pre- "ſence than the ſame Exiſtence; no other Sub- "ſtance exiſts, but the one eternal, immenſe, in- "telligent Subſtance or Being; and all Things "are Modes or partial Conceptions of his Ex- "iſtence or Eſſence: This I take to be ſtrict "Demonſtration, or I know not what is."

I am ſorry you ſhould call the above Reaſoning Demonſtration, than which nothing is more unlike to real Demonſtration: The Premiſes have nothing to do with the Concluſion; and the Concluſion, as I apprehend, is big with manifeſt Abſurdities.

I obſerve therefore upon it; 1*ſt*. Two Beings of the *ſame* Preſence is indeed a Contradiction: But two Beings, the Mode of whoſe Exiſtence or Preſence is eſſentially *diſtinct*, are no Contradiction; and this is the Caſe of us finite contingent Beings, and of God; who is ſelf-exiſtent: We exiſt in a contingent Manner by God's Will: God exiſts not in a contingent Manner, or by the Will of any Agent; but exiſts in a ſelf-exiſtent

iſtent Manner, or by a Neceſſity of Nature; which makes his Preſence of eſſentially diſtinct Kind and Nature from ours, and to be eternally and abſolutely infinite.

2. You ſay, *that ſomething exiſts, is evident a Poſteriori*; but it cannot be evident *a Poſteriori*, if no *ſecond* Cauſes exiſt, but the Exiſtence of theſe you denied in the former Part of your Letter, and allow only of one univerſal Cauſe, ſuppoſing all other Things to be mere *Modifications* of it. Therefore nothing can be proved *a Poſteriori*: This I am ſure is Demonſtration on the Foot of your Notion.

3. Your Concluſion that nothing exiſts, but God and Modes, or partial Conceptions of his Exiſtence, you may ſee has no Relation to the Premiſes from whence you drew it; and is attended with the following plain Abſurdities.

1. It follows hence that *we* and *Matter*, are not only *eternal*, but *ſelf-exiſtent* and *immutable*, becauſe it is demonſtrable, that all the Modes or Properties of God's Subſtance are founded on that *Neceſſity*, which is the Ground of his Exiſtence, and are with the Subſtance *eternal* and *immutable*. 2. It follows again that either *we* are not *Agents* diſtinct from God, or elſe that as many ſelf-exiſtent Agents exiſt, as there are intelligent Agents diſtinct from God, and all theſe in one Subſtance, which cannot be divided ſo much as mentally. 3. It follows, That if our Intelligence and Agency are founded in the divine Subſtance, or are only Modifications or Properties of the divine Subſtance; our Intelligence muſt be equal with GOD's, *i. e.* perfect and infinite: and our Agency in like Manner, perfect and omnipotent. There can be no imperfect or finite Properties

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in the perfect and immenſe divine Subſtance; no Imperfection of Thinking or Acting, conſequently no Sin or Error, which ſufficiently and ſelf-evidently proves that we are not Modes of God's Subſtance; but diſtinct intelligent Agents, *finite* and *mutable*.

4. Neither the Subſtance of God, or any Mode of it is capable of *Motion*; This is ſelf-evident; yet we are *ſelf-motive*, and Motion is demonſtrable from the Evidence of Senſe, and I ſhall as ſoon doubt of my own Exiſtence, as of the Reality of my Senſes; though the Evidence is not equal in both Caſes. If you doubt of Motion (though neither relative or abſolute Motion can be conceived in God's Subſtance or Properties) I ſhall not diſpute that Matter with any Man. But the Inactivity of Matter (as you ſuppoſe) has nothing to do with Motion. Matter whether active or paſſive, if moved, ſurely may excite the Idea of Motion in us: Nothing is plainer. Space is a *Vacuity* not of Subſtance, but of *Solidity*, or *Reſiſtance*; and therefore admits Motion of other Subſtances; and that Space or God's Subſtance is eſſentially independent of all other Subſtance and Modes whatſoever, is evident, becauſe ſuppoſe them or all other intelligent Agents (as you eaſily may) annihilated, Space ſtill remains immutably the ſame, and ſo can neither be the Subſtance or Mode of any finite mutable Exiſtence. There is then no Contradiction in the Motion of Subſtance in Space; unleſs it be a Contradiction (which cannot be ſhewn) for ſolid reſiſting Subſtance to exiſt and move in Space, which is not reſiſting or ſolid.

If you could prove that the Idea of Space, is the Idea of immenſe Solidity, or that Space is ſolid,

ſolid, and may be ſeen and felt, as Matter may, it would be to your Purpoſe, but not otherwiſe.

In ſhort, it is equally abſurd, to ſuppoſe either Modes to exiſt without Subſtance, or that WE, or Matter are only Modes or Properties of God's neceſſarily exiſtent and immutable Subſtance; and if ſo, we muſt be of diſtinct *Exiſtence*, and *Preſence* from God, a diſtinct Subſtance endued with the Modes of Intelligence and Agency, finite and mutable.

Modes without Subſtance, you are ſenſible, are nothing but abſtract Ideas, which have no real Exiſtence; they are in reality, only partial Conceptions of Subſtance, and always preſuppoſe it.

I hope, that by your laſt Remark, you do not intend to deny God to be an Agent, and to be endued with Will, from whence voluntary Exertion of Power follows of Courſe, and may be, and probably is (I think) *eternal*.

If the Abſurdities, which I have endeavoured to ſhew to attend your Notion, be really ſuch, as I think, they are; then I need not tell you, that your Notion is inconſiſtent with all Senſe, Philoſophy, and Religion; which if you perceive, will, I doubt not, engage you to quit it.

I am with Sincerity,

Your very humble Servant.

I beg you will carefully attend to what I have carefully written, to ſhew the Abſurdities and ill Conſequences of what I apprehend to be your Notion.

LETTER V.

Reverend SIR,

I Am favoured with your's of *April* 24; and give me leave to take Notice of the laſt Part of your Letter firſt; which is the commendable Zeal you ſhew in oppoſing Tenets, which *you think inconſiſtent with Senſe, Philoſophy, and Religion*; but then I would not have you too forward, as ſome learned Men have been, in tacking abſurd Conſequences to *true* Principles, which upon due Conſideration will be found not to follow: Beſides you know that if any Principles are demonſtratively true, their fair Conſequences muſt be admitted, be what they will. I aſſure you, Sir, that I never did, or ſhall, *knowingly* maintain, or defend any Principles, which are inconſiſtent with that Philoſophy and Virtue, which is founded in Nature, Senſe, Reaſon, and Experience, and not in mere Fancy or Imagination; unleſs it be, for this good Reaſon, *viz.* to have them ſolidly confuted; and ſo I reſume the Point in Debate. It is preciſely this.

I alledge and ſincerely believe, till I ſee better Reaſons to the contrary, that the Arguments for the Exiſtence, Immenſity, and Unity of the divine Subſtance, if they are concluſive, *prove that no other Subſtance exiſts*: And I think it more conſiſtent with Senſe, Reaſon, and Virtue, or true Philoſophy, to give up the Exiſtence of *all other* Subſtances, than the divine Subſtance, which is *all-ſufficient*. And it appears to me true, with the Evidence of a Maxim, *That if God exiſts always and every where, he is every Thing, whether Subſtance or Properties*, and according to the firſt Intent,

Intent, and Reaſon of my writing to you, the Trouble of proving the contrary falls to your Part. However, as I have not only made, but endeavoured to prove my Objection, I ſhall again try to clear it from the great and evident Abſurdities which you think do attend this Notion, which appears to be the Conſequence of your own Arguments; in order to this, I obſerve

Firſt, That the Foundation of all your Reaſoning to the contrary of what I ſtill think *Demonſtration*, is built only upon a bare Suppoſition, or a thing taken for granted, which ought firſt to be proved, *viz. the Exiſtence of material or immaterial Subſtance, the Mode of whoſe Exiſtence, or Preſence is eſſentially diſtinct from God's.* This Subſtance is by Mr. *Locke* and all the Logicians, confeſſed to be an *unknown Subject*; and therefore, as I have no Idea of it, either from Senſe or Reaſon, it evidently appears to me, to have no other Mode and Place of Exiſtence or Preſence, than all other *Caſtles of the Air*, or Works of mere Imagination have, which a lively Fancy can create and vary ten thouſand Ways, and annihilate at Pleaſure. But I cannot ſee why all ſuch *Fancies* are oppoſed to a *real exiſting* or ſelf-exiſtent Subſtance or Being or Mind, the Cauſe of all Things or *Ideas*, which are the *Effects* not *ſecond Cauſes*, from whence I infer their Cauſe, *viz. God*, and not an *unknown Subject*. All our Knowledge, but of God, is about *Ideas:* They exiſt only in the Mind, and their Eſſence and Modes conſiſt only in being *perceived*; and from their being excited in us, *independently of our Will*, we immediately infer their *Cauſe*, who excites them in us, and at the ſame time makes us capable of perceiving them and comparing them, *&c.*

This being ſo in fact, I preſume that my Demonſtration of the Exiſtence of One only immenſe *&c.* Subſtance, remains unſhaken. Not to multiply Words,

Secondly and *Laſtly*, I obſerve, That beſides the above *chimerical Notion* of material Subſtance, you have a *true Idea* of Matter, which *Matter* you ſay, may be *ſeen* and *felt*, and I add, taſted, ſmelled, and heard, likewiſe. Theſe Ideas, I am certain, as aboveſaid, are excited in me by the *immediate Cauſe of all Things* (who at the ſame Time makes me capable of perceiving them) and not by an *unknown Subject*.

It is extremely ridiculous to talk any thing about an *unknown Subject*, that it exiſts, that it is *active*, which exciting of Ideas implies, or even *paſſive*, if a *paſſive Subſtance* was Senſe; a *Subſtance* or thing ſupporting, and *Paſſiveneſs*, or being ſupported, are Oppoſites. A Thing or Idea may be relatively or *improperly* ſaid to *ſupport* other Things, as the Earth is ſaid to produce or ſupport Vegetables, *&c.* But who, except thoſe who take the Name of Philoſophers for wandering after ſecond Cauſes, knows not, that God is the *immediate Support or Cauſe* of Earth, Water, Air, Fire, Vegetables, and all the various Combinations of *ſenſible Ideas*; And further, *that we are his Offspring*, and *that he works in us both to Will and to Do of his good Pleaſure*, and that *none can reſiſt his Will*. God exiſts neceſſarily: His Diſpoſition or Deſire is neceſſarily Good: His Will neceſſarily follows, or is ſubſervient to, or determined by his Diſpoſition: His Knowledge and Power are both neceſſarily ſubſervient to his Will, as *that* is to his natural Diſpoſition; and thus the Chain of *Neceſſity* (not an *external* but an *internal* Neceſſity) lies

lies in Order of Nature, and runs through all God's *neceſſary* and *voluntary** Manifeſtations of himſelf; and there is no *real* or *abſolute Evil*, Sin, or Error, in all Nature; although ſome Ideas are *relatively pleaſant* or *painful*, as are the Ideas of Virtue and Vice. I hope you will be pleaſed to conſider and diſcuſs the main Objection, before you proceed to its Conſequences, which if *fair*, muſt be admitted. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your ſincere Friend and Servant.

May 5. 1736.

P. S. Since I wrote to you laſt, *A Defence of Humane Liberty*, 2*d. Ed.* came to my Hand. And in my Opinion, the *true Notion of Neceſſity* is ſtated, Page 153. and *Plotinus* his Arguments againſt it, which he calls an *Exceſs of Neceſſity*, are the true or fair Conſequences of it, and upon that Scheme only, can ſatisfactory Anſwers be given to your Objections, p. 53, 54. of your additional *Vindication of Human Liberty*. But I am ſorry, that neither my Time nor Circumſtances will allow me to diſcuſs theſe Matters fully; and I have done more already this way than is conſiſtene with my outward Quiet. I am ſorry alſo to ſee the Bonds of *Charity* or Virtue moſt broke through by them who pretend to be moſt on the Side of Religion or Virtue, in their Reaſonings, and even in their Practice or Actions. And yet I believe all theſe Things, *which I cannot help be-*

* *Will* is not oppoſed to Neceſſity, but to outward Co-action or *Force*.

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ing ſorry for, are *ordained* of God for the greateſt Good. Our Language is adapted to vulgar Conceptions, and not to philoſophical Truth: And therefore I hope you will not take the Advantage of my ſpeaking of Actions, which are but *Paſſions*, and *relatively ill*; but *really good* upon the whole. Far from ſeeing the Relations of Things to one another, and to the whole of Nature *fully*, how can we pronounce any Thing wrong in her Conſtitution, or think that any of her Works need mending. On the contrary, our View encreaſing, charmed with her Perfections, who can help crying out with a noble Author, O! Glorious Nature! ſupremely fair, and ſovereignly good! *&c.* You'll excuſe me. Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

Reverend SIR,

I Wrote to you *May* 5, and have received no Anſwer as yet; but whether you did not get my Letter, or got it, and your Anſwer to it is miſcarried; or that you do not incline to write again, be the Reaſon of my Diſappointment, I cannot gueſs. If I was ſure that the laſt, and none of the two firſt, was the Caſe, I ſhould not have troubled you more. Any of the Letters being loſt; I would be glad to repeat it, or have it repeated, that we may, if poſſible, come to ſome End in theſe Matters in Debate.

In my laſt, in Anſwer to yours of *April* 24, I ſhewed that our Senſes informed us only of the Exiſtence of *Ideas*; and from theſe Ideas, which are excited in us independently of our Will, we immediately inferred their *Cauſe*, viz. *God*, and not an *unknown Subject*, as *Subſtance is*, by all the Logicians ſaid to be. And that it is ridiculous to talk any thing of an *unknown Subject*, and that nothing can properly or in Truth be called a *Subſtance*, but God.

In yours of *April* 24, you ſay, *Two Beings of the ſame Preſence is a Contradiction, but two Beings, the Mode of whoſe Exiſtence or Preſence is eſſentially diſtinct, are no Contradiction.* Spiritual and material Subſtances, you own, do agree in this Mode of Exiſtence, *viz.* That both are *extended*, and ſo occupy a Part of Space at leaſt, and have Dimenſions. You alſo own, *That if Matter*, to which you attribute Solidity, and Extenſion, *was proved to be immenſe, it would be to my Purpoſe* to demonſtrate the Exiſtence of one only Subſtance: For the ſame Reaſon

ſon allowing ſpiritual Subſtance to be *immenſe*, it is as much to my Purpoſe; for *where* can Matter, which hath the *ſame* Mode of Exiſtence with Spirit, *viz. Extenſion*, exiſt, unleſs you allow a *Penetration of Dimenſions*, which is impoſſible and contradictory.

In ſhort, two or more *limited* Beings of the ſame or different Kinds, may exiſt in *different* Parts of Space, but two Beings immenſe or limited of the ſame or different Kind, cannot exiſt in the *ſame Place* or Space, without a Penetration of Dimenſions, which is impoſſible and abſurd; and a Being of *no Dimenſions*, or *unextended*, not occupying Space, exiſts *no where*, or is a Chimera; Therefore if the divine Subſtance *fills all Space*, no other Subſtance can poſſibly exiſt of any Kind whatever. If God is *omnipreſent*, no other Subſtance exiſts, but what muſt have the *ſame Preſence* with him, and ſo muſt be the *ſame Being*.

If you be reſolved, Sir, to drop this Correſpondence, pray let me know it frankly; that I may apply elſewhere for a Solution of ſome philoſophical Scruples connected with theſe Principles. I have little Time indeed for ſuch Enquiries, but a ſtrong Deſire exciting me on to them; and if you drop me, I do not know where to find ſo able a Hand to direct and aſſiſt me. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your obedient humble Servant.

June 26. 1736.

ANSWER

Answer to LETTERS V. and VI.

Sir,

SOON after the Receipt of your Letter of the 5th of *May*, I went into *Derbyſhire* and *Yorkſhire*, and returned not Home till *Friday* laſt, when I found the Favour of yours of the 26th of *June*.

I thought indeed by the former of theſe Letters, that you was willing to drop the Subject of Debate, which had been fully diſcuſſed on both Sides. I gave you my Reaſons in the plaineſt and ſtrongeſt Manner I was able to put them for the Exiſtence of Subſtance diſtinct from God, with the Abſurdities which appear to me to follow the Denial of it; ſome of which you are not ſatisfied with, and ſome you have not yet taken Notice of, or replied to them. I ſhall therefore, in order to give you the beſt Satisfaction I can, at leaſt my own ſincere Thoughts of the Matter, conſider the Sum of both your laſt Letters, which is,——That there is no Subſtance exiſtent but God, who excites all our Ideas neceſſarily in us, and which Ideas have no *Ideatum*, Properties, or Subject, but God only, who has made us perceptive of them; and ſo you deny, if I underſtand you, not only Subſtance, but Properties of Subſtance diſtinct from God; and indeed, if you allow Properties external to us, diſtinct from God, you muſt admit ſome Subject or Ground of theſe Properties, and this is what is called *Subſtance*, which is an Idea or Object not of *Senſe* or *Imagination*, but of mere *Intellect*; and is as eaſily and clearly *underſtood*, as the Ideas of its Properties are *perceived*. We perceive not

by our Senſes the *Subſtance* of God: His Subſtance in this Reſpect is as *unknown* as the ſuppoſed Subſtance of Matter, or Spirit diſtinct from God is; but we certainly infer by Intellect and Reaſoning the Exiſtence of his Subſtance, from the Ideas which we have of his Attributes or Properties, and from the Ideas of finite and mutable Things, from which we argue to an infinite and immutable Cauſe; and which latter Ideas of finite and mutable Things, are Ideas of Properties, (not Properties of God, this is impoſſible, but) of diſtinct Beings exiſting without us, in which they exiſt; and whoſe Subſtance we as clearly underſtand, as we do the Exiſtence of the Subſtance of God: ſo that in Reality, neither the Subſtance of God or of Matter, *&c.* are *unknown Subjects*: They are both of them certainly, and in like manner known or inferred from their Properties, of which we have clear and diſtinct Ideas.

It is, I grant, poſſible (the contrary not being ſtrictly demonſtrable) that all our Ideas of external Objects, whence we infer their real Exiſtence without us, may be excited in us by God, without the Exiſtence of any external Properties or Subjects: But as this ſuppoſes all our Senſes perpetually deceived, and our Reaſon or intellectual Faculties, to be always unavoidably led into Error; ſuch a Notion of Creation and Providence is highly abſurd, and inconſiſtent with the Perfections of God. Nor, if it was true, would it at all ſhew the Truth or Poſſibility of your Hypotheſis of the Non-exiſtence of Subſtance diſtinct from God.

You ſuppoſe God to excite Ideas in Us; I aſk what is this *US*, that has Ideas excited in it? If

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it is a real exiſtent living and intelligent Subſtance, the Diſpute is at an End, unleſs *we* are the *ſelf-exiſtent* Subſtance itſelf (of which Notion I ſhewed the Abſurdity before, as ſuppoſing Pain, Error, and Imperfection in God:) If this *US* is diſtinct from God, as it muſt be, and is not a *Subſtance*, it is either a mere *Idea*, or a Connection of *Properties:* but to ſuppoſe Ideas excited in a mere Idea, or a mere Idea to be *percipient*, is ſo evidently abſurd, as nothing can ſcarce be equally ſo: If this *US* be a Connection of Properties, then they infer a Subſtance, as plainly and neceſſarily as the Subſtance of God is inferred from his Properties or Attributes; and I no more underſtand that Ideas can be excited in mere abſtract Properties, without a living percipient Subſtance in *Us*, than *God*, or than they can be excited by mere abſtract Properties in a mere *Idea* or mere *Nothing*, which is the abſurdeſt of all Abſurdities. So that why you ſhould ſuppoſe the Subſtance of God to be known, or inferred from Properties, and not our Subſtance likewiſe, I cannot comprehend.

Laſtly; If God could be ſuppoſed, to be merely a Connection of Properties without Subſtance, or even a mere Idea, I ſee not but that the *Infinity* of his Properties or Perfections, or the *infinite* Exiſtence of this mere Idea (if Infinity excludes every thing diſtinct from it) muſt be as incompatible with the Exiſtence of any other diſtinct Property or Idea, as the Exiſtence of an *Infinite Subſtance* is incompatible with the Exiſtence of any other *diſtinct Subſtance.* So that at laſt you muſt, I think, be driven in Conſequence of your Notion, not only to deny the Evidence of *Senſe* (of which I gave you one Inſtance, *viz.*

Motion, which ſuppoſes a moving *Subſtance*, which cannot be the Subſtance of God, whoſe Immenſity is a Contradiction to Motion; and a moving *Idea*, or *Property* is a great Abſurdity likewiſe) but even your own Exiſtence; and to argue that Nothing does or can exiſt but God.

If now you will demand of me, how or in what manner any Thing exiſts, beſides God, I am not aſhamed to anſwer, that I know not the Mode of any Exiſtence, or what conſtitutes the *Eſſence* of Things: but yet as I cannot doubt of the reality of my own Exiſtence as diſtinct from God's Exiſtence, both as an imperfect Percipient and moving Agent; ſo I doubt not of your Exiſtence, and of the reality of external Objects, whoſe Subſtances are the Ground of thoſe Properties, which excite by means of the Organs of our Senſes, Ideas in us, and that God acts by theſe as by ſecond Cauſes.

You greatly miſtake in ſuppoſing all Ideas to be excited in us *neceſſarily*; a great, and by far the greateſt Part are *voluntary*, being the Reſult of voluntary Obſervation and Reflection; and to ſuppoſe that we are not Agents, is contrary both to Senſe and Reaſon; and on this Suppoſition, Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil, are but mere Names, and Pleaſure and Pain ought not to follow either the one or the other, or ought to follow both indifferently; and the Conſciouſneſs or Idea of Blame and Demerit, or of Merit and Well-doing are quite abſurd, if we are not *Agents*: This is therefore the worſt of all Notions, and ſuppoſes a great Imperfection in God, with Relation to us, and no leſs in himſelf; if he is not a *voluntary* Being or Agent. For *Agency* is undoubtedly

doubtedly the higheſt Perfection of an immutable Being, and *Non-agency* one of the greateſt Imperfections of a mutable Being. Power and Intellect, cannot be perfect, or form Wiſdom and Goodneſs without Agency, *i. e. Voluntary* Exertion of Power and Intellect exempt from Neceſſity external or internal, both which are alike oppoſite to *Agency* and to *moral* Perfection.

Your great and only Objection againſt the Exiſtence of other Subſtance, drawn from the *Infinity* of God's Subſtance, depends entirely, I think, on Suppoſition of our Knowledge of the *Manner* of the Exiſtence of God's Subſtance, or of the Mode of neceſſary Exiſtence, of which we know nothing more than that ſuch a Property is, and cannot but be. *Infinity*, I own, excludes the Exiſtence of Subſtance of the *ſame Kind*, or whoſe Exiſtence is *neceſſary*: But our own Exiſtence, Properties and Motion, being as evident to us, as the divine Exiſtence and Properties are, and having a different Mode of Exiſtence from God, as being not *neceſſary*, but *dependent*, we cannot but infer (ſince this Exiſtence, Properties and Motion cannot be God, or any Properties of his Subſtance, or can be a mere Idea) that we are a diſtinct, dependent, living, moving and acting Subſtance. To conclude, if we have a true Idea of the *Extenſion* of Matter, it is evidently different from *Space*; the firſt being *finite*, *mutable* and *moveable* Extenſion, the latter *infinite*, *immutable* and *immoveable* Extenſion; and theſe Modes of Exiſtence being thus eſſentially diſtinct, may be Modes of diſtinct Subſtances, though we neither know how either exiſts, or how they are co-exiſtent.

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I cannot add any thing more, either for your Satisfaction or my own; and ſhould be heartily glad to be an Inſtrument (how mean ſoever) of bringing you or any Lover of Truth to the Perception of Truth, eſpecially in a Subject of ſo great Importance, as the right Knowledge of God, and of our ſelves.

I am with Sincerity,

Your moſt humble Servant.

P. S. What you ſay in your ſixth Letter of my *owning*, that if *Matter &c.* was proved to be *immenſe*, it would be to your Purpoſe of demonſtrating the Exiſtence of *one only Subſtance*, is altogether a Miſtake of your own, and has not the leaſt Foundation in my Letter; and ſo your Reaſoning on this Miſtake is quite foreign.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

Reverend SIR,

I Am favoured with yours of *Auguſt* 11. in Anſwer to both my laſt, and am particularly well pleaſed with the gentle and ſtrong Reaſoning of it. If I had known when you was in *Yorkſhire*, I might perhaps have ſpared a few Days to have had the Advantage of the inſtructive Converſation of ſo great a Philoſopher and Divine, which my low Circumſtances and buſy Life, will not allow me to come by at a greater Diſtance. I will ever reckon my ſelf highly obliged to you, for your kind Endeavours to give me the true important Knowledge of God and our ſelves by your Letters, though this End would probably be ſooner and eaſier obtained by Converſation, if that could be had conveniently.

Thinking that you had dropped me, I applied to a worthy Friend of Dr. *Clarke's* for farther Satisfaction on theſe Heads, *viz.* The Right Reverend Father in God, *Benjamin Lord Biſhop of Wincheſter*; and I thought it more than needleſs to offer an Apology for addreſſing ſo eminent a Divine for Inſtruction, whoſe great Abilities and beneficent Diſpoſition is acknowledged, even by his Enemies. I expect not his Anſwer ſo ſoon.

As it is an Honour few controverſial Writers have yet allowed themſelves, to yield to the Force of Reaſon and Truth, and it is none to yield where theſe do not appear; I ſhall ſhew you how far I acquieſce in your Reaſonings, and how far I do not. This by my following ſincere Thoughts of the Matters in Debate, laid down

down in the ſimpleſt manner I can, you will judge of.

That one eternal, infinite, intelligent Subſtance or Being exiſts, I own to be demonſtrated, but though you ſay, *That we perceive not by our Senſes the Subſtance of God*; yet I feel that in every Inſtance, I am *ſupported* by this univerſal Subſtance or Being (and conſequently all the Qualities or Properties, which I am improperly ſaid to ſupport) and who affects me with Ideas of Pleaſure and Pain, independently of my Will: and this *voluntary* and at the ſame Time *neceſſary Activity* of God and *Paſſiveneſs* in me, I think conſtitutes the *Diſtinction* between the *Self-exiſtence* of God, and my *dependent Exiſtence*. That Ideas exiſt in the Self-exiſtent Mind, and in the Minds of dependent Beings, *without* my Mind I allow; but that there are *material* unthinking *Subſtances*, or Objects exiſting *without all Minds*, I rather think that *we deceive ourſelves*, by inferring the *Exiſtence* of any ſuch Objects from *Ideas*, which can only exiſt in the Mind, and which one Mind can only excite in others, than *that our Senſes are deceived*, and ſo caſt what is our own Miſtake, upon Providence. *

I do not at all deny God's *Agency*, though I think he acts *neceſſarily*, and ſo in the *perfecteſt Manner*, as thus I formerly ſhewed; *viz.* God exiſts neceſſarily; His Diſpoſition is neceſſarily good; His Will is neceſſarily determined by his Diſpoſition; His Wiſdom and Power are both neceſſa-

* Solidity, Reſiſtence, Motion, Reſt, I conſider only as Ideas or Perceptions attended with Pleaſure or Pain, according to the preſent Diſpoſition of finite Percipients, not as *Properties* of any Subſtance, which I ſee no Reaſon for.

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rily determined by his Will, as that is by his natural Diſpoſition; and ſo an *internal Neceſſity* lies in order of Nature, and runs through all God's *neceſſary voluntary, and perfect Works.*

As to the Neceſſity that reigns through the Actions of dependent Beings, it is complicated and *imperfect*; we are *neceſſarily* determined by the very Frame or Conſtitution of our Nature to purſue what *appears* to us, to be our Good or *Happineſs*: Our Will is *neceſſarily* determined by our natural Diſpoſition, or Deſire of Happineſs; and our Knowledge and Power are both *neceſſarily* determined by our Will, as that is by our natural Diſpoſition. (And therefore it is to no Purpoſe to talk of a *Power to act or not to act* in any Caſe *contrary* to this Diſpoſition; but our Knowledge being attained by ſlow Experience, and our Power gradually increaſed, hence by the neceſſary Conſtitution of our dependent Natures, which cannot admit of Perfection, we are unavoidably liable to *Miſtakes* or wrong Purſuits of our real or greateſt Happineſs in ſeveral Inſtances.) This is called a *moral Neceſſity*, in Contradiſtinction to a *natural* or rather an *unnatural Neceſſity*, outward Coaction, or Force upon us by external Circumſtances.

Thus our natural Diſpoſition or Deſire of Good or Happineſs is a general fixed Principle, which *inevitably determines* us in all our Actions, and whoever attends to what paſſes in his own Mind, will find ſeveral Paſſions or Affections in it, *exciting* to this End: Some of which as more ſtrictly regarding the Agent himſelf, are called *private* Paſſions, and others regarding the Syſtem, with which he is connected, are called *publick* or *benevolent Paſſions.* The Exerciſe of the ſocial Paſſi-

ons is our higheſt Enjoyment, and the conſiſtent Gratification of all the Paſſions, private and publick, is our *greateſt Intereſt* or Happineſs, which is always obtained in Proportion to our Degrees of Knowledge, Power, and external Circumſtances. And by the Conſtitution of our Natures, we are determined to *approve* of Virtue, or a benevolent Diſpoſition and Courſe of Actions in ourſelves and others, and to *diſapprove* of Vice, or an entirely ſelfiſh Diſpoſition and Courſe. This is called the *moral Senſe*, which perceives and approves or diſapproves of Virtue and Vice. And thus Virtue hath and, in my Opinion, only can have a Foundation on the *Neceſſitarian Scheme*; while the Scheme of *Liberty* or of dependent Beings their being left to act *contrary* to the Intention and Will of God, is contradictory in itſelf, contrary to Fact, and attended with innumerable Abſurdities.

To ſuppoſe a *dependent* Being acting *contrary* to the Intention and Will of the Being upon whom it *depends*, is an expreſs Contradiction: A ſuppoſing it *independent* while it is *dependent*, and granting that a Being of perfect Goodneſs, Wiſdom, and Power, is the Author and Governor of the Univerſe; every Thing in it muſt be for the beſt, Good, Perfect, and *according to his Intention*, Will, and Immediate Direction. The contrary of this cannot be ſuppoſed true, without throwing up the Perfections of the Deity, His particular Direction and Government; then indeed endleſs Confuſion might enſue.

As to the Evils which come to paſs, while a perfect Being *preſides*; they muſt only be relatively, improperly, or *apparently* ſo, but *really good* in the whole Scheme of Things, though we do

do not fully ſee the Relations of Things to the *whole*. And I cannot ſee why the Maintainers of abſolute Decrees, Neceſſity or Fate, ſhould be *blamed* for making God the *Author* of *Evil*, *e. g.* in *ordaining a Tyrant to enſlave a People*, more than when *he deſtroys a Fleet at Sea*, going to relieve them, *by a Storm*, which is certainly his own *immediate Work*; unleſs it be ſaid, that he hath left the natural as well as the moral World, to itſelf: And granting this Abſurdity, how can any be ſure, *that ever he will regard them more?* It is evidently inconſiſtent with the Character of a *perfect Being* to make any of his Works *ill*, or to *permit* any of them to *run wrong*, ſo as to need *mending*. But why do I inſiſt upon theſe things to a Perſon of your Diſcernment; if you have any thing further to add upon theſe Subjects, I wait it with Pleaſure, if not, and if you think that theſe Papers may be of *any Uſe* to others, you are welcome, for my Part, to publiſh them. Iam,

Reverend Sir,

Your real Friend and humble Servant.

Auguſt 30. 1736.

Answer to LETTER VII.

Sir, *September* 25. 1736.

HAving been abroad ſome Days, at my Return Home, I found the Favour of your Letter of the 30th of *Auguſt*; and am very glad that you ſee and ingenuouſly own (what is a main Part of the Debate between us, *viz.*) That we are really exiſtent *Minds* and intelligent *Beings* diſtinct from God, and dependent upon him; and I always thought as you do, That our Exiſtence and all our Powers are continually ſupported by the infinite omnipreſent Subſtance and Power of God; as I alſo think (in which we at preſent diſagree) that the Exiſtence and Powers of Matter are continually ſupported by the ſame infinite Subſtance and Power. But our Exiſtence and Powers being thus ſupported by God, does not imply either that our Minds are not the Subject of Properties, diſtinct from the Attributes of God, though dependent upon Him, or that what we call *our Action* is improperly ſo, and is only the Effect of Activity in God, and mere Paſſiveneſs in us. You do not therefore (I think) *feel that God affects you with the Ideas of Pleaſure and Pain, independently of your Will*; you muſt feel, or be conſcious that many of your Ideas are the Effect of *voluntary Reflection*; that you *chuſe* to revive ſome which were before received, and to form others by Compariſon and Compoſition of ſimple Ideas. This is *your own*, not *God*'s Act; and in Reſpect of thoſe Ideas, in the Perception of which we are paſſive, our Aſſent or Diſſent in Point of *Action*, is ſtill voluntary. This to me is *intuitive* and above all Demonſtration. No doubt, but that

that God may excite all thoſe Ideas in us, which we think we receive by means of external Objects and bodily Organs; but to ſay that we feel or are conſcious that he does excite them in every Inſtance is ſurely deceiving our ſelves. And I hoped you would allow there is Reaſon and the greateſt Probability (though not Demonſtration) for the Exiſtence of ſenſible Objects, and bodily Organs, diſtinct from thinking Subſtance, which are by God's Appointment the Means of exciting Ideas in the Mind. You think, that *one Mind can only excite Ideas in others*, without the Medium of Matter, but how this can be, without an immediate *Preſence* of our Minds to each other, I cannot conceive; that we do excite Ideas in other Minds to which we are not *preſent*, we plainly perceive, and therefore it muſt be either by means of intervening Beings to which we are *preſent*, and on which we *act*, and which are the Means or Inſtruments of conveying the Ideas we intended to excite in others by their Impreſſions on bodily Organs, to which the Mind is *preſent*, and either acts on them, or is acted upon by them; or elſe you muſt ſay, that we do not excite Ideas in other Minds by means of bodily or ſenſible Objects or Organs, but that upon our meer willing to have Ideas excited in other Minds, God alone by his *Preſence* and Power excites them; and this at leaſt ſuppoſes Will and Volition in us, which you do not yet clearly allow. But I cannot but think, that as we really excite Ideas in other Minds, we excite them by means of bodily or material Organs, and ſenſible Objects; and ſo alſo that the Ideas of *Reſiſtence*, *Figure*, *Motion*, &c. are the Effects of real Properties of external, unthinking Subſtances,

ces, or Beings: We are agreed about the Exiſtence of percipient Subſtance or Mind diſtinct from God; and methinks the Exiſtence of corporeal unthinking Subſtance, tho' not equal, is next in Evidence to it; and the Suppoſition of its Exiſtence is only a Suppoſition of what our Senſes inform us, of what we may be perfectly ſaid to feel; and a Suppoſition that Things are what they appear to be, and not a mere Dream or Deluſion; and which alſo being ſuppoſed to exiſt, are evidently ſo far from being inconſiſtent with the Exiſtence of the *Immenſity* of Space, or of the Subſtance of God [which yet is your only Objection againſt their Exiſtence] that they neceſſarily preſuppoſe this Immenſity. I can add no more on this Head, and muſt leave what is ſaid to your Reflection.

Your talking of a *voluntary and at the ſame time neceſſary Activity of God, and Paſſiveneſs in us*, is what I by no means underſtand, unleſs you mean, that the voluntary Activity of God is neceſſary only as being *neceſſarily exiſtent*, which Senſe, I allow; and that we, though *voluntary* Agents, are neceſſarily paſſive, or to be *acted upon*, as being *dependent* and mutable Beings, which I alſo allow: But you think God acts *neceſſarily*, and ſo in the *perfecteſt* Manner. On the contrary, to act *neceſſarily*, is indeed not *to act*, but to be *acted upon*, which you know is an Imperfection; and is that *Paſſiveneſs* which diſtinguiſheth dependent Beings from God. You add; *His Diſpoſition is neceſſarily good*; I anſwer, God neceſſarily indeed knows and approves what is right and good, but this is not *Goodneſs* in God, any more than in us. Goodneſs properly conſiſts in Agency, which Agency you admit, and that conſiſts in *voluntary*,

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not in *neceſſary* Exertion of Power. God's Will is determined, but not neceſſarily by his Diſpoſition, as you ſay, or by the eſſential Rectitude of his Nature, or by his eternal neceſſary Perception of Right and Wrong, Good and Evil: Theſe are the Motives, or Ground of the Determination of God's Will; and which is not a *neceſſary* but a *voluntary* Determination; nothing is more evident to me. Will or *Agency* and *Neceſſity* at the ſame Time or in the ſame Reſpects as you ſuppoſe, are an Aſſociation of Ideas which are incompatible, and contradict and deſtroy each other. Say, that God exiſts by the *Neceſſity* of his *Will*, or *Agency*; or that his *Will neceſſarily* determines his Exiſtence; or that he is *neceſſarily*, but withal by *voluntary* Agency exiſtent; and you will (I think) eaſily ſee the Abſurdity of *internal* neceſſary, as well as *external* neceſſary Agency. Where then there is *Agency*, there can be no *Neceſſity*. If the divine Mind by *Neceſſity* (external or internal, it is all one) and not by Will exerted God's Power, in the Production of Things, every Thing would be *neceſſarily* eternal, infinite and immutable, and ſo *independent*; becauſe every thing would have the ſame Ground of Exiſtence with the Exiſtence of God, *i. e. Neceſſity*; of which Suppoſition, I believe, you immediately ſee the Abſurdity. What therefore again diſtinguiſheth us from God, is, that he exiſts by *abſolute Neceſſity* of Exiſtence, which is the *Ground* or *Reaſon* of his Exiſtence; and we exiſt by his *Agency* or *Will*, as the *Ground* or *Reaſon* of our Exiſtence; and which makes it *limited*, and for ever *dependent* upon him. Thus in like manner, to what is above argued concerning God, we *neceſſarily* perceive what is right and good, and cannnot but approve of it: as alſo

what

what is wrong or evil, and cannot but diſapprove of it; and this neceſſary Perception, Approbation, and the contrary, may be called a *moral Senſe*, and in it we are paſſive: But then your Miſtake lies in ſuppoſing this to be Virtue or Goodneſs, which is only a *Motive* to them, and a Ballance to our Paſſions drawing us the contrary Way. If we neceſſarily *acted*, as we neceſſarily *perceive*, approve, and diſapprove, we could neither be capable of Virtue or Vice, Good or Evil; nor conſequently ought to be capable of Pain or Pleaſure, Happineſs or Miſery, as the Conſequence of them; unleſs we ſuppoſe Virtue and Vice in mere Perception and Motion: and ſo one Intention or Motion would be equally good or bad as another, and no more rewardable or puniſhable in a moral Senſe, than mere Perception, and the Pulſation of the Heart or Arteries. Virtue therefore and Goodneſs are the Effect of *voluntary* Agency in Agreement to the *moral Senſe*, or the Perception and Approbation of them; and Vice and moral Evil, what we act freely in Diſagreement or Contradiction to it, or from contrary Motives, as unreaſonable Paſſions, *&c.* Virtue then can never ſtand, as you think, upon the Scheme of Neceſſity: On this Ground it muſt be of an indifferent Nature, as all *neceſſary* Perceptions and Motions are, and can be but nominally diſtinct from Vice: And Neceſſity evidently deſtroys all Duty and Diſobedience, Merit or Demerit. He who *neceſſarily* blaſphemes God, or kills the Innocent, is as pious and virtuous, and has as much Right to Happineſs, as he who *neceſſarily* worſhips God, or preſerves the Life of the Innocent. Nothing, I think, is more evident than this.

Laſtly;

Laſtly; The Suppoſition of *Liberty* is ſo far from a Suppoſition *of acting contrary to the Intention and Will of God*, that this Suppoſition is only true of *Neceſſity*. The very Idea and Notion of Liberty or Agency, ſuppoſeth it to be God's Will and Intention, that rational Beings ſhould act *freely* one Way or the other; and that he gives them Power, either by Obedience to his Laws, to make themſelves happy, or by Diſobedience to them, to make themſelves miſerable; and ſo they are far from being *independent*, as you ſtrangely argue: And thus it is God's Will, that final Happineſs and Miſery ſhould not be the Effect of *blind Neceſſity*, but of *free Agency*. If Sin and final Miſery are the Effects of Neceſſity, they are not in our Power; and are either God's Work, and he alone is the Author of them, or they are nothing *moral*, or no *Evil*; both which are equally and evidently abſurd.

It cannot be God's *Will and immediate Direction*, who is a perfect Being, that we ſhould be neceſſarily wicked and miſerable (this is contrary to his Perfection and an Impoſſibility;) but it muſt be ſo, if Actions naturally producing Miſery are neceſſary. They are then his Action, and the Miſery proceeds from Him, and is *his Work*, and by your arguing, muſt be his *Will*, and *immediate Direction*. This indeed is plainly making his Works *ill*, and not only permitting, but neceſſitating them *to run wrong*, as you expreſs it: and is an evident Mark of the moſt imperfect Being. Therefore, if human Actions were neceſſary or determined by the Will or immediate Direction of God, without any Will or proper Agency of our own, as you ſuppoſe, they would be invariably right, wiſe, and good, as

being immediately directed and determined by the infinite Rectitude, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of God, and ſo moral Evil could not have Place in us, any more than in God himſelf; otherwiſe, you muſt ſuppoſe (what is the greateſt Abſurdity) a perfectly *good* Being to be the Author of real *Evil*, a perfectly *wiſe* Being to be the Author of *Folly*; and that he forceth us to act contrary to the Rectitude of his own Nature and Will, and then makes us miſerable for ſo doing. If God acts thus by his *Will*, he is a malevolent Being, if by the *Neceſſity* of his Nature, he is ſtill an *imperfect* Being; and every Way the Scheme of Neceſſity is a Scheme of Providence, which deſtroys all divine Perfection, and ends in *Atheiſm*. God being the Author of natural Evil, is eaſily reconcileable to his moral Rectitude, becauſe *natural* Evils in the whole tending and being Means to *moral* and final Good, are really no Evils, as not interrupting or interfering with true and final Happineſs; but *moral* Evil or Sin is real Evil, deſtructive of rational and final Happineſs, and ſo cannot be cauſed by God's Will, or immediate Direction: Making God the Author of Evil in this Senſe, is deſtroying his Perfection and conſequently his Being.

I am with all Sincerity

Your Friend and Servant.

LET-

LETTER VIII.

Reverend SIR,

I Am favoured with your's of *September* 25, and with one from the Biſhop of *Wincheſter*, who declines to enter upon theſe Subjects; but I am glad we are agreed about the firſt Subject of Debate, *viz.* The Immenſity and Power of God, and the Exiſtence of one only immenſe Subſtance; for you allow, *That We, Matter*, and all Things, *are continually ſupported by the Infinite, omnipreſent Subſtance and Power of God.* We then are *Beings dependent* upon God, the only Immenſe All-powerful Subſtance, in whom we Live or Exiſt, and Matter may be a Collection of ſenſible Objects or Ideas exiſting in the divine Mind, (for I can have no Notion of Subſtances exiſting in a Mind, and *out* of the univerſal Mind nothing can exiſt) *ad extra* to the Minds of all finite Percipients. But whether there be Objects exiſting *without* or *ad extra* to all finite Minds or not, yet as you allow, That God can excite the Ideas of them in our Minds, though they did not exiſt, theſe Ideas ſerve all our Purpoſes of Pleaſure and Pain, as well, the *Impreſſions* themſelves being *real*, as if they did infer external Objects or Inſtruments, which indeed we muſt own, a perfect Being ſtands in no Need of in his Workings, though limited Beings do. God can, (and I ſee no Reaſon for his doing otherwiſe) effect every thing by a mere Act of his Will, without Inſtruments, which yet if he did uſe, it cannot be ſaid that there is any Activity or *Power* in the *Inſtruments*, but only in the *Agent*; ſo that I do not ſee that any

Powers can be attributed to *Matter*, ſuppoſing God uſed it as an Inſtrument.

I allow you, That we limited Beings, as we cannot do otherwiſe, excite Ideas in other Minds, by the *Intervention* and Mediation of other *Ideas* or ſenſible *Objects*, which are *real* Things or *Ideas* not Subſtances including Activity or Power.

Having ſaid enough upon this Subject, I proceed to conſider what ſeems to me more important; and which the firſt Subjects of Debate led us into: *viz.* to conſider the Nature of Neceſſity or Fate, and the Foundation and Diſtinction of Virtue and Vice upon this Scheme. And though you think, that the *Scheme of Neceſſity ends in Atheiſm*, for my Part, I cannot ſee that it does, but on the contrary, when *rightly explained*, it ends in *Theiſm*. This I ſhall endeavour to do in as clear and ſhort a Way as I can, by *firſt* ſhewing, How the Actions of God, are at the ſame Time neceſſary, voluntary and good; and *next*, How the Actions of Men are neceſſary, voluntary virtuous or vicious, and approveable or diſapproveable, good in Kind. And *laſtly*, though imperfect, conſpiring to the greateſt Good in the whole; and by this obviate your Objections.

1*ſt*, To be acted upon by another, I allow you, is an *Imperfection*, and the Being who acts in Conſequence of this, cannot properly be ſaid to be active, but paſſive in his Actions, and this cannot poſſibly be the Neceſſity by which God acts. But God acts by *a Neceſſity of his own Nature*, i. e. from his natural Diſpoſition, which is the Spring of all his Actions, and which is the Thing, that denominates a Being, Good, Evil, or Selfiſh. If it is a benevolent Diſpoſition, or a Deſire to communicate Happineſs to ſenſible Beings,

Beings, then it is called *Good:* If it is a Diſpoſition to make ſenſible Beings unhappy, then it is called *Evil:* And if it is a Diſpoſition to purſue his own Happineſs, without Regard either to the Happineſs or Miſery of other Beings, but as theſe conduce to his own Happineſs, then it is called *Selfiſh.*

And theſe Denominations they take *antecedently*, to any *Action* of the Being, in order to theſe Ends: So that what you ſay of *Goodneſs conſiſting in Agency*, is a miſtaking the Matter altogether; for the ſame Action may be good, evil, or ſelfiſh, according to the Diſpoſition it flows from; and if we know that a Being hath a *kind* or *benevolent* Diſpoſition, we call him a *Good Being*, though he be incapable to ſhow it, or to act according to his kind Intention.

The natural Diſpoſition of God to communicate Happineſs, is the Cauſe, the *neceſſary Cauſe*, of his willing it, and of his Knowledge and Power being applied for this End. And thus it appears that willing and acting for the Happineſs of ſenſible Beings, are the natural *neceſſary Effects* of his natural Diſpoſition, which is neceſſarily *benevolent* or *good*. And ſo far as we are convinced of a Being's *acting neceſſarily* from a benevolent or *good* natural Diſpoſition, ſo much our *Love* of that Being, our *Truſt* in, and *Submiſſion* to him, encreaſeth: ſo far is the Notion of Neceſſity, or of God's willing and acting neceſſarily in Conſequence of his natural Diſpoſition, from *deſtroying* Religion, that it is the beſt *Foundation* and *Encouragement* of it. And granting that God *deſigned* the Happineſs of Mankind, and that he hath perfect Wiſdom and Power to *contrive* and *execute* the Means of it, all Mankind muſt be

ultimately

ultimately happy, as happy as their *different* Conſtitutions and Capacities will allow. Nor do I ſee a Poſſibility of *defeating* this End, by introducing what tends to real or abſolute Evil, or *final Miſery*; neither do I ſee any thing in Nature that tends this Way, but the contrary. And further, I think, that all who go about to maintain the Exiſtence of any thing that tends to abſolute Evil, whether by God's Ordination or Permiſſion, with his Will or againſt it, *arraign* the Goodneſs, Wiſdom, or Power, of the *Author* and *Preſerver* of Nature, though they would ſeem to caſt the Blame elſewhere. But theſe Opinions flow not, I think, from any evil Diſpoſition, but from Men's neglecting to follow the Dictates of Reaſon and Nature, and following the Prejudices of Education, and an unwarrantable *Authority in Matters of Faith*.

I come in the next Place to conſider the Actions of Men.

2*dly*, The natural Conſtitutions of dependent Beings, whatever they be, are derived from God, the *Author of all Things*; and the natural Conſtitution of Mankind, we experience, *neceſſarily* determines us to *purſue* Pleaſure, and *avoid* Pain. And this natural Diſpoſition or Deſire of Happineſs is the Cauſe, the *neceſſary Cauſe*, of our willing it, and of our Knowledge and Power being applied to obtain this End. Our Happineſs, we find, is neceſſarily connected with that of other Beings, and of the whole Syſtem. So that we cannot purſue our own Happineſs, without promoting in ſome Degree, the Happineſs of the Syſtem of which we are Parts or Members.

The Exerciſe of the ſocial or publick Paſſions, I called Virtue, and not the neceſſary Perception, and Approbation of it, which I called a moral Senſe or Conſcience, as you miſtake me to do.

Now

Now our natural Deſire of Happineſs being the general fixt Principle of all our Actions, and having ſeveral Paſſions, private and publick exciting to this End; the Paſſions and Ideas ſpringing up in our Minds, and thoſe excited in us from *without*, *depend not upon our Will*, but on the Will of the ſupreme Spirit, the Author of our Nature, and Circumſtances: for we are under a *Neceſſity of Thinking at all Times*, at leaſt while awake, and by the Conſtitution of our Nature, being neceſſarily determined to purſue Pleaſure and avoid Pain, this natural Deſire of Happineſs neceſſarily determines our Will, and all our limited or imperfect Faculties, or Powers of Thinking and Acting, by reflecting, comparing, conſidering or reaſoning to find out the Means, and all our natural Powers or Abilities, to apply them for the obtaining of this End, and avoiding Pain or Miſery: And thus it appears that our Reflections, *&c.* though voluntary, are at the ſame Time neceſſary, and that all our Powers of *willing*, reaſoning and acting, as well as theſe of perceiving, are the natural and *neceſſary Inſtruments* of our natural Diſpoſition, or Deſire of Happineſs; And further, That Virtue, though it be the *neceſſary Effect* of a benevolent kind or good Diſpoſition, and Vice the *neceſſary Effect* of a ſelfiſh Diſpoſition, yet we neceſſarily approve or diſapprove of them, as well as perceive them in our ſelves and others.

Laſtly; As no Creatures can be made *abſolutely perfect*, they muſt of Neceſſity, in Proportion to their Degrees of Perfection and Circumſtances, or through want of perfect Knowledge, Power, and advantageous Circumſtances, *miſtake*, or fall ſhort of their greateſt Happineſs, which is connected

nected with that of others. Hence from the *neceſſary Imperfection* of our dependent Natures, ariſeth all *moral Evil*, which is only that of *Imperfection*, which can infer no other Puniſhment from the *Deity*, but what is the *natural Effects* of ſuch Miſtakes; and this in the natural Conſtitution and Courſe of Things, tends to the *Improvement* of the Agent, by *teaching* and *exciting* him to act more *conſiſtently after*; ſo that theſe Miſtakes are ſo far from tending to real or abſolute Evil, that they tend to abſolute Good, with reſpect to the Agent, and conſequently to the Syſtem of which he is a Part or Member. And as a Syſtem or Conſtitution, in its very Notion implies *Variety*, and the Nature of the Thing requires it; ſo we ſee in this World an inconceivable *Variety* of Creatures, and among the ſeveral Species of theſe, as great a *Variety* of Diſpoſitions, or Tempers, Capacities, Circumſtances, and as great a *Variety* of Objects and Events *ſuited to theſe*, to anſwer the *good Ends* of Providence; and it is this Gradation, and Subordination of Creatures, this Variety and Difference of Inclinations and Purſuits, that makes ſo *beautiful* a *Contraſt* in the Great DRAMA; that lays a Foundation for *Action*, *Intercourſe*, and a *Plot*, which is abſolutely neceſſary for the *Happineſs* and *Improvement* of Mankind, and without which there could be no Happineſs but of the dulleſt Sort, ariſing merely from the Gratification of ſenſual Appetite. From this Conſideration and View of Things, it appears, that Vice or moral Evil, which is the *neceſſary Effect* of the *variouſly proportioned* Diſpoſitions, Tempers, Paſſions, Reaſon, Circumſtances, *&c.* of Men, is not only a *neceſſary Imperfection*, that Creatures cannot be made without

without (as is ſhewn above) but is alſo *neceſſary* and *abſolutely fit* and requiſite to the *Beauty* and *Happineſs* of the whole Syſtem Ordained and Directed of God. A full Delineation of theſe Principles, and an Illuſtration of them by Inſtances would fill a Volume, which I have neither Time nor Abilities for; but would be glad to ſee this Subject fully treated by a proper Hand. I am with Sincerity, and Gratitude for your Aſſiſtance in theſe Speculations and Enquiries,

Reverend Sir,

Your moſt humble Servant.

October 8. 1736.

P. S. To give one Inſtance to illuſtrate the above Reaſoning; *Perſecution*, and all its horrid terrible Effects, is perhaps the *greateſt Objection* to this Scheme of Theiſm. To it I reply, That to *permit it* comes to the ſame with *ordaining it*, but if the ordaining *ſerves a good End*, even to the perſecuted, and at the ſame Time proceeds from no directly evil Intention or Diſpoſition in the Perſecutors, where is the *Evil* of *ordaining it?* yea rather the ordaining of it, would be neceſſary and *fit* to cauſe an Overballance of *Good* in the whole Scheme. The common Belief, *That Opinions recommend to the Favour of God*, neceſſarily leads People of *good Tempers* to bring others to *Believe ſo and ſo*, firſt by gentle, then by any means, at laſt when none prevail, to *hate them*, and *treat them* as God's Enemies. This is the natural Source of Perſecution, *Good in itſelf*, but ariſing from *miſtaken* or wrong *Notions* of Religion. As to

the End Perſecution ſerves, I need not tell you, *That Tribulation or Affliction is the School of many eminent Virtues.* Mr. *Chandler*'s *Introd. to Hiſt. of the Inquiſition*, p. 18, informs us, "That as the "primitive Chriſtians had any Intervals from "Perſecution, they became more profligate in "their Morals, and more quarrelſome in their "Tempers." The *Neceſſity* then of Perſecution was evidently *fit*, and uſeful to *mend* the *Tempers* and *Morals* of the Perſecuted, beſides to be of good Example to others.

To ſhut up all in a Word, *moral* as well as *natural Evil* muſt tend to *final Happineſs*, or abſolute Good in the whole Syſtem of Things, though we cannot account for every *Appearance*, and ſo is not *Sin* or *real Evil*; or elſe we muſt give up the *Perfections* of the *Deity*, and take up with the moſt *uncomfortable* of all Opinions, That of *forlorn Nature*, and a *Fatherleſs World*, except that more *horrid one*, of Things being either *willingly* or *weakly* ſo conſtituted and directed, *as to introduce Sin or Evil deſtructive of rational and final Happineſs*, equally impoſſible and abſurd.

ANSWER

Answer to LETTER VIII.

Sir, *October* 20. 1736.

I Received the Favour of your's of the 8th Inſtant by the laſt Poſt, and think, I perceive by it, That different Ways of conceiving and expreſſing one's Sentiments about the ſame Subject, make an Appearance of Difference betwixt the Notions of different Perſons, where there is really none, or where there is ſome Difference, make that greater than it really is.

You have allowed, that we are *percipient Beings*, or *Minds diſtinct* from God, and in your laſt Letter, you allow that *we excite Ideas in other Minds by the Intervention and Mediation of other Ideas, or ſenſible Objects, which are real Things or Ideas, not Subſtances including Activity or Powers.* I never ſuppoſed *Matter* to be an *active* Subſtance, but only to have a Power by its *Preſence* to the Mind to excite Ideas in it, and what you allow to be an Intervention or Mediation of *ſenſible Objects*, is what I call *Matter:* for as a mere Idea cannot be ſaid, with any Propriety to intervene or be a Medium of conveying or exciting Ideas, ſo neither God or mere Ideas are ſenſible Objects; and nothing remains to be this Medium, but *material* Subſtance, which is a *real thing* and *ſenſible Object.*

2. You chuſe not directly to reply to my Objections againſt univerſal Fate and Neceſſity, but endeavour to obviate them, by explaining your own Senſe of them. In this Explanation, I perceive you admit *Will* and *Agency* in God, (without which you are ſenſible Virtue and Goodneſs cannot exiſt) but then you make his willing and acting the *neceſſary* Effect of a *neceſſary* Cauſe;

viz. His natural Diſpoſition to communicate Happineſs to Intelligent rational Beings. In which, methinks, I ſee what miſleads you: For I allow that the Rectitude of the divine Nature, or God's natural Diſpoſition to communicate Happineſs, has a neceſſary Foundation in his neceſſary perfect Intelligence or Reaſon, which is alſo the Cauſe or Ground of his acting: and ſo you may call it a *neceſſary Motive* of Action; but then it follows not (in which I apprehend your Miſtake lies) from the Motive of Action being neceſſary, that the Action occaſioned by it, is neceſſary: becauſe the Motive and Action have not the ſame immediate or eſſential Ground of Exiſtence: The Ground of the *Motive* is *Neceſſity*, but the Ground of *Action* is *Will*, or a ſelf-exerting and determining Power, which you, I think, admit. A Motive or Cauſe of Action being in reſpect of the Agent, neceſſary, would make the Action neceſſary, if Action was nothing but Motion or Impulſe neceſſarily connected with the applied Motive; without any *Self-exertion* of Power, or Determination of *Will:* But as Self-exertion and Will are required to Action, ſo they can reſiſt any Motive; and this we clearly perceive in our ſelves. The Motive therefore is only the Cauſe *ſine qua non*, the ſecondary and concomitant, not immediate and *efficient* Cauſe of Action to rational Beings: It is a *Reaſon* why the Mind acts by voluntary Exertion of Power, and this Volition is that which determines and limits the Agency, which otherwiſe would be of unlimited Continuance.

I think you cannot poſſibly conceive that God's *acting* proceeds from that natural *Neceſſity*, which is the *Ground* of his Exiſtence: If it did, the Effects of it muſt be (as I argued in my former Letter, and to which Part you have given no Anſwer)

Anſwer) *eternal* and *immutable*, which is moſt abſurd to ſuppoſe, as making every Thing independent of Him. Action then is the Effect, not of natural or abſolute Neceſſity (which is but one and uniform) but of Will, or voluntary Exertion of Power, which is conſiſtent with, and the Ground of all poſſible Variety, and of a Syſtem of Things, which cannot, without it, be any way accounted for, or ſhewn *poſſible*.

You cannot but conceive that the Works of God, might poſſibly have been otherwiſe, or in another manner, or in ſome Reſpect different from what they are; might poſſibly have been more or leſs in Number, of more or leſs Duration and Extent, though it is admitted, that they proceed from perfect Power, directed by perfect Wiſdom and Goodneſs: If there is ſuch a Poſſibility, it is evident, theſe Acts or Works of God proceeded not from Neceſſity, but voluntary Agency: and to ſay there is not ſuch a Poſſibility conceivable, is to contradict the cleareſt Notions, and Evidence of things. So that I would hope that you mean, that God acts, not by a natural abſolute Neceſſity, but only by what is called a *moral* Neceſſity; *i. e.* in an Agreement with perfect Reaſon, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, which is as invariable as if it was neceſſary.

3, You think it follows from God's *natural and neceſſary Diſpoſition to communicate Happineſs, conſidered with his perfect Wiſdom and Power to contrive and execute the Means of it*; That all Mankind muſt be *ultimately Happy*. If we were Intelligent Beings, and not Agents, it would be ſo, on Suppoſition of a future Continuance of our Being: But then our Happineſs would be merely *ſenſitive*, not *rational* or *moral*; and therefore would be of the loweſt Kind, and not ſo worthy

of

of God to communicate, as you are ſenſible in the latter Part of your Letter. The moſt perfect Happineſs is that which we create to our ſelves, and make *our own* by a free and right Exerciſe of our rational Faculties: This Happineſs is of a *divine* Nature; all other, is but ſenſitive or animal. I think then, that nothing is more evident, than that as any Man may make himſelf miſerable (for a Moment ſuppoſe) if he *will*, ſo he may make himſelf always or finally miſerable, if he *will*. This follows demonſtratively from the Nature of imperfect Agents: And therefore, as preſent and temporal moral Happineſs and Miſery are *our own* Work, and the Effects of our own *Will*, and free Choice, and were originally deſigned by God to be ſo, and moſt wiſely ordained to be ſo, and indeed are neceſſarily ſo in the Nature of Things, (Happineſs or Miſery proceeding from Neceſſity being not *moral*, or the Happineſs of *rational* Agents) ſo future and final Happineſs and Miſery will in like Manner be *our own* Work, or the Effect of a right or wrong Choice: And yet God may have, (and I believe has) provided reaſonable, ſufficient, and effectual Means for the ultimate and final Happineſs of all rational Beings. And as this is better provided for by a *voluntary*, than an *involuntary* and forced Obedience, and Well-doing; by our willing, rather than being neceſſitated to be wiſe and good; ſo I hope you do not differ from me in this Matter, though you expreſs your Notion in the ſecond Part of your Letter in a different Manner, and to all which, if the Expreſſion was a little varied, I ſhould have no Objection.

I am

Your ſincere humble Servant.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

Reverend SIR,

THE Favour of your's of *October* 20. I received, and am hopeful we ſhall agree in all our Sentiments that are of any Moment.

You agree with me *that Matter is not an active Subſtance*, and yet you immediately add, *that it hath a Power by its Preſence to the Mind to excite Ideas in it.* If Matter hath a *Power* to excite Ideas in the Mind, it is certainly an *active* Subſtance, contrary to what you before ſaid: And indeed if Matter be a *Subſtance*, it muſt include *Activity* or *Power*. If People always kept the ſame Idea or Definition of Subſtance, which is uſually given of it, *viz. A Thing ſubſiſting by itſelf, independently of any other, the Subject of Accidents or Qualities*, much Debate about Subſtances might be ſpared; for in this Senſe, there can be but *one only Subſtance*, (as I have all along argued, and you have demonſtrated in your Vindications) *Eternal*, *Infinite*, &c. In this proper Senſe of the Word Subſtance, I think, you will not allow Matter to be a *Subſtance*, with the *real* Properties of *Extenſion*, *Power*, &c; but only a *ſenſible Object*, which I cannot, as you do, diſtinguiſh from an *Idea* or Perception *: For Ideas are the proper Objects of Senſe, and God is the proper Author, or immediate Cauſe of both our Senſes and their Objects. And Ideas are ſometimes at leaſt, excited in our Minds, as in Sleep, without the Preſence of *external* Objects, and gives us *real* Pleaſure and Pain.

* There is indeed a Difference between the real immediate Perception of an Object, and Reflection on that Perception after.

I always

I always agree with you, that there is *Will*, *Reaſon*, *Agency*, as well as *Diſpoſition* to uſe them in the Deity. But then this Diſpoſition, which we agree is benevolent or *Good*, ("For the *General Mind* can have no *particular* Intereſt, but "the general Good, or Good of the whole, and "its own private Good, muſt of Neceſſity be "one and the ſame*") is antecedent to them all, and they only the *Inſtruments* of attaining the *Ends* which this Diſpoſition or Deſire excites to. A Being cannot be conceived to will, reaſon, or act for any End without *firſt deſiring it*: So that I cannot underſtand, *how God's natural Diſpoſition to communicate Happineſs has a neceſſary Foundation in his Intelligence or Reaſon.* This is making one Attribute, *viz.* Goodneſs, to be *founded* in another, *viz.* Intelligence. One Attribute in order of Application does naturally and neceſſarily *preceed* another; as 1*ſt*, Diſpoſition towards an End; 2*dly*, willing it; 3*dly*, reaſoning about the Means to it; and *laſtly*, executing them. And theſe Attributes, *Infinite Goodneſs*, *Wiſdom*, and *Power*, all founded in the divine *Subſtance*, *make up* GOD'S PERFECT CHARACTER, or what you may call *divine Rectitude*; in Conſequence of which, all his Works muſt of Neceſſity be good, right, or according to his Intention, *abſolutely Happy*; and this we call a *reaſonable End*; becauſe our moral Senſe *approves* of it, upon immediate Perception. But whether or not there can be any *ſucceſſive* deſiring, willing, reaſoning and acting in the *divine Mind*, is what I preſume not to determine, otherwiſe than as he *animates and influences all Things*, according to the Opinion of the ancient *Stoicks*, but without being

* Characteriſticks, Vol. I. p. 39, 40.

acted

acted upon: for I can conceive of the divine Operations in no other Way. To *reason* or conſider of the beſt Means, he needs never do, as he *intuitively knows* all Things. With him there can be no *ſecondary Cauſe*, or Motive of Action; but his perfect Deſire is the *immediate Cauſe* of his willing or acting according to his perfect Knowledge. He wills and it is done. But it is not always thus with dependent Beings. We neceſſarily deſire our own Happineſs: We *will* it; our *imperfect* Intelligence makes us reaſon about the Means of it: And our Deſire of Happineſs *neceſſarily* determines us to *chuſe* what *appears* to our *limited* Conceptions to be the beſt Means, and *to act* accordingly.

A Man, I own to you, *may make himſelf miſerable*, or to ſuffer Pain, *for a little Time*, in View of a greater future Good, *if he will*; *and ſo he may make himſelf always or finally miſerable, if he will*; but then it is impoſſible for him to *deſire*, and conſequently to *will final Miſery*, as you ſuppoſe; and it is evidently *inconſiſtent* with the divine Goodneſs, to make us *miſerable* (*ultimately* ſo I mean, for preſent Pain we may be ordained to ſuffer in order to future Good) *againſt our Will*, if our *future* Exiſtence is *conſiſtent* with our *Happineſs*, (which conſiſts in the Gratification of our *moral* and publick Senſes, as well as of our *private* Senſes; for all Happineſs or Pleaſure is *ſenſitive* or perceived by a Senſe) as I doubt not it is, (and who would deſire it, if it is not) we have no more Reaſon to doubt of it, whatever Changes we may undergo, than of the divine Goodneſs, and his perfect Wiſdom and Power, to accompliſh his good Deſigns; for upon *theſe*,

the *Continuance* of our Being entirely depends, as our *preſent* Exiſtence doth.

Dr. *Clarke*, (*Being and Attr. of God*, p. 104. *Ed.* 7.) and all who contend for *its being God's Will and Intention, that rational Beings ſhould act freely, to make themſelves happy or miſerable*, as you expreſs it in your former Letter, allow "the "Neceſſity of the *various* and different Degrees "of Creatures for diſplaying the infinite Wiſ-"dom of the Creator, whereof, conſequently "ſome muſt be *leſs perfect* than others, and ſo "*liable to abuſe their Liberty* (which by the way, is no more than a Freedom from *external* Impediments, or a natural Power to act or not to act, which is neceſſarily determined by the Will, as that is by the natural Diſpoſition of the Agent) "to the actual Commiſſion of Evil." Now, Sir, allowing this *Variety* of Creatures neceſſary for the *Diſplay* of Infinite *Wiſdom* in the Creator; yet if it was not as much for the *Diſplay* of perfect *Goodneſs*, which can intend no *final Miſery* or abſolute Evil in its Government, that Wiſdom ſhould give Way to the ſuperior Quality or Attribute of Goodneſs: For what can we think of that Wiſdom which is not employed for a *good End?* Beſides, to make Creatures ſo *imperfect*, as to be *liable to abuſe their Liberty*, or rather under a Neceſſity from their imperfect Conſtitution to miſtake Evil for Good, and yet to *expect* and *require* that theſe *imperfect* Beings ſhould never ſo *miſtake*, or *abuſe their Liberty*, is a plain Abſurdity, and to *puniſh* them merely for ſo doing, is evident Injuſtice and Wickedneſs: for moral Obligations can extend no further than natural Poſſibilities. It is to no Purpoſe to reply, That they have a natural Power to act in *another Manner*, a Power

Power to do Good as well as Evil; for if they *want Deſire* ſtrong enough to ſurmount all Obſtacles to Good, and a *Capacity* of *Reaſon* to diſcover the beſt Means to it, their natural Power, which is but an Inſtrument, cannot be *applied* to it; and if moral Evil is Sin, or *real Evil*, why *ordain* any thing that hath a greater Tendency than another, as *leſs perfect Creatures*, to bring it about? The Truth is——*Things cannot be otherwiſe, or in another Manner, or in any Reſpect different from what they are*, whatever we may imagine, *as they proceed from perfect Power, directed by perfect Wiſdom and Goodneſs:* For if we ſuppoſe an *Alteration* of the *Effects*, we muſt ſuppoſe at the ſame Time, an *Alteration* in the *Cauſe*, which is impoſſible: *Neceſſary Goodneſs*, with perfect Wiſdom and Power ſubſervient to it, is *an unalterable ſteady* Principle of Action; a Syſtem or Conſtitution *without Variety*, Gradation, Subordination, mutual Correſpondency and Relation of Parts, is a natural Impoſſibility and Abſurdity. *Variety*, Gradation, and Subordination of Creatures, with as great a *Variety* of Diſpoſitions, Tempers, Capacities, Circumſtances, and as great a *Variety* of Objects, and Events *correſponding to theſe*, ſo as to conſtitute the World properly one Adminiſtration or Government, cannot be conceived *otherwiſe*, without *deſtroying* the Nature of the Thing, and the Beauty and Happineſs of the whole. Suppoſe the contrary (for we may ſuppoſe what in Fact cannot take Place) *viz.* an *Equality* of Diſpoſitions, Capacities, Circumſtances of any one Species of Creatures; for Example, MEN, and let them be ſuppoſed of any Degree of Perfection you pleaſe, ſo as never to commit *one Fault* or Wrong to others, and you

will immediately ſee the Abſurdity of ſuch a Suppoſition. It deſtroys the *very Being* of a Conſtitution or Government, and all *Foundation* for Action, Hope, Improvement and Happineſs, except of the dulleſt Kind. What could ſuch a Sett of Beings do? or how employ themſelves? Where could be the *Foundation* for *good Offices?* or for the *Exerciſe* of the nobleſt Paſſions, of *Generoſity*, *Compaſſion*, *Fortitude*, &c. if their *correſponding Objects* were not *ordained?* If there was no Vice, *moral Evil*, or Miſtakes, interfering of Intereſts, Competitions, *&c.* there could be as little Virtue, or *moral Good.* There could be no *Society* here, no need of Laws and their Sanctions, no Ground of Debates to *improve* the Underſtanding. In a Word, There could be no *Foundation* for growing in either Knowledge or Goodneſs, if ſuch a Scheme was not laid for contracting Acquaintance with Men and Things, for Converſe, Cotreſpondence, mutual good Offices, *&c.* And this can only be where there is *Variety* of Tempers, Capacities, Inclinations and Purſuits, and as great Variety of *correſponding* Objects and Events. And ſuch is the *preſent beſt Conſtitution*, where all the *Variety* of Things are ſo *contempered* and *adjuſted* by infinite Wiſdom and Power as to produce the greateſt Happineſs or abſolute Good of the whole, which cannot poſſibly be *altered* for the *worſe*, while perfect Goodneſs preſides.

After all; If we ſeriouſly and attentively look into our ſelves, where our Knowledge is moſt certain, we find that the *univerſal Genius* or Mind, animates and influences us all, *works in us both to will and to do of his good Pleaſure*, towards general *univerſal Good* or Happineſs, and this without ſo much

much as our conſidering of, or *knowing* the real Ends of our Actions. Our Appetites, Paſſions, Deſires, (that are very many, ſuited to all Kinds of Objects, preſented to us, and which depend upon our Conſtitution, of which God is the Author) prompt, excite, or indeed *cauſe* us to act for the Preſervation of the Individual, and Good of Society, when none of theſe Ends are in our *View*. Children eat, drink, ſleep, *&c.* without any ſuch View as Self-preſervation, but are altogether *influenced* by their Nature, or rather the *Author of it*, to theſe Things. Men are the ſame way *influenced*, and Experience only tells them of the *final Cauſes* of theſe Appetites, Paſſions or Movements; and then they *knowingly* concur with theſe Excitements. It is the ſame with the benevolent Paſſions or Movements; and Men even promote publick Good, when they intend only private Advantage. And when there are Competitions among the Paſſions, Private with Private, Publick with Publick, or Private and Publick, the *ſtrongeſt always carries it*, and *neceſſarily* determines us to act, with more or leſs Conſideration, and ſometimes with no Conſideration at all, according to the Strength of it.

Brutes, leſs perfect Creatures than Man, are *influenced* in the ſame Manner by their Paſſions or Inſtincts. And indeed ſo inſenſible is the Gradation among all Beings, that ſome Men differ little from Brutes; and if moral Obligation was in Proportion to natural Power or *Agency*, in which ſome place the Idea of *Liberty* and *Accountableneſs*, Ideots and Brutes have often the greateſt Share of it; and therefore would be under the greateſt moral Obligation; which is evidently abſurd. It is plain then, that it is the *Strength*

and

and *Ballance* of the Paſſions, Affections or Inclinations, and the *Strength* of Reaſon and Judgment, which depend upon their Conſtitutions, and their external Circumſtances, that *cauſe* Men to act in *this* or in *that Manner*, as the Author of our Nature and Circumſtances *ordains* and *directs*. And thus we are Intended by Providence, and Made *Inſtruments* of Good to one another, and to the whole, without our directly *knowing* or *intending* it in every Caſe; and as we improve in Knowledge, ſo as to ſee plainly that the general Good, and our own private Good is *the ſame*, our natural Diſpoſition or Deſire of Good or Happineſs, will neceſſarily determine our Will, and natural Powers, to concur with the *general Intention* or *Deſign*, and we ſhall be more and more *perfect*, and *happy*, in Proportion as our natural Deſires of private and publick Good (for we have Inſtincts to them both, and both being connected together, the Means to both are the ſame) and our Capacities to advance them *encreaſe* by Diſcipline, Experience, Uſe, or Practice, which ſtrengthens all Deſires, Habits, and practical Principles.

It may be obſerved here, That Practice *ſtrengthens* vitious Habits as well as virtuous Habits. To this it may be anſwered, That there is a very great Difference between them; Virtuous Habits are attended with a *growing Pleaſure*, and ſpoil no Organ, as not depending on the Body; but Vitious or entirely Selfiſh Habits, which few contract, (they being always *mixt*,) the more we indulge them, give always *leſs* and *leſs* Pleaſure. The Organ becomes more and more *unfit*, till at length it is entirely deſtroyed by Death, which ſeems only a *Change of State*, where we may *retain*

tain our Habits of Goodneſs, Virtue, Reaſon and Knowledge, while the more ſelfiſh Appetites or Deſires and Habits of Vice, though neceſſary and of uſe in this *infant State*, may be *dropt* here with the Body. But ſtill that new and more *perfect State*, muſt be ſuppoſed a *Society*, where a Gradation, and Subordination of more *improved* Creatures will obtain; which only can lay a Foundation for *Improvement* in Goodneſs, Knowledge, Virtue and Happineſs to *Eternity*.

Having now explained my ſelf on the Subjects before us, ſo as you underſtand me, I hope we ſhall *agree* in our Sentiments about them, though differently expreſſed, as Men will readily do, who have no other View, but to follow Nature and Truth in their Reſearches; at leaſt if we happen to *differ* in our Conceptions of things, we ſhall do it with becoming Grace and Charity. I am, with Truth and perfect Eſteem,

Reverend Sir,

Your moſt humble Servant.

November 2. 1736.

ANSWER

Answer to LETTER IX.

Sir, *December* 10. 1736.

MY Anſwer to the Favour of yours of the 2d of *November*, is as follows.

Matter does not excite Ideas in us by its Agency or Activity, but by its *Inactivity* or *vis inertiæ*; and by its *Motion* and *Impulſe*, neither of which imply *Activity*. Nor does *Subſtance*, as ſuch, include Activity or Intelligence. The Idea of *Subſtance* is no more than the Idea of a *Subject* or *Ground* of Properties; ſome of which in created Subſtances are *eſſential*, *immutable* and *inſeparable*; and others are accidental or *mutable* and *ſeparable*: and every ſuch Subſtance is (in reſpect of its Exiſtence) *independent* of any other ſuch Subſtance, though not of the eternal ſelf-exiſtent Subſtance of God, which comprehends and ſupports all other Beings.

Matter then is a real *Subſtance* or a real Subject of Properties; which Properties, and not the Subject of them, are the Objects of our Senſes. An Idea is the *Perception* of an Object, not itſelf a ſenſible Object; and there muſt be allowed a Difference between the Perception of the Object in the Mind, and the Object itſelf which is external to it and perceived by the Mind. The Ideas excited in *Sleep* are cauſed immediately by Matter, or the Motion and Impulſe of the animal Spirits and Nerves.

2. A *good Diſpoſition* in God, *antecedent* (as you ſuppoſe) to his *perfect Intelligence* or *Reaſon*, is undoubtedly ὕστερον πρότερον: for though all the divine Properties are coeval with themſelves and with the Subſtance; yet, as we cannot conceive *Good-*

neſs

neſs and *Agency* without ſome Ground or Foundation or Reaſon of them, ſo they cannot poſſibly be conceived at all without the Preſuppoſition of *Intelligence*. Intelligence therefore, in Order of Idea or Conception, does not *follow*, but does *precede* Goodneſs and Agency; and is no Doubt the Ground or Foundation of them; there being no conceivable Reaſon of God's chuſing or willing and doing always what is *right* and *beſt* (having no Motive *ad extra*) but his perfect Intelligence and uninterrupted Perception of whatever is right and beſt in all poſſible Exiſtences: this I cannot but think to be evident.

So that the perfect *Intelligence* of God, who knows it to be better to act than not, and alſo his having an intuitive Perception of all neceſſary and poſſible Agreements and Diſagreements of Ideas, and of all poſſible real Exiſtences correſpondent to them; this perfect Knowledge of an Agent, not poſſible to be biaſſed or deceived or determined by any Thing but the eſſential Nature of the Ideas or Things themſelves ideally perceived, muſt (and nothing elſe) be the Foundation of his exerting his Power or Agency in the Production of Things.

3. In this Production and Conſtitution of the Univerſe, God ſees it *right* and *fit* that Happineſs ſhould be the final Conſequence of moral Truth or Virtue *voluntarily* adhered to; and Miſery the Conſequence of moral Falſhood or Vice *voluntarily* perſiſted in. And this is ſo agreeable to the Nature of Things, that it is not poſſible to conceive Happineſs finally to go along or be connected with Wickedneſs, or Miſery with Virtue. God may and probably will always afford Agents *Means* or *Motives* [by which only *he works* in us, and not by *Fatality* or an irreſiſtible Power, *both*

to will and to do] of making themſelves happy; and they may be ſuppoſed to be effectual, but not without *ourſelves working out our own Salvation* or Happineſs: becauſe it is not, it cannot be *fit* that rational Agents ſhould be finally either happy or miſerable, but only in Conſequence of their own free Actions. This, I think, evidently ariſes from the Nature of Will and Agency, and of moral Truth and Falſhood, or Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil, as being the Objects of ſuch Agents. And thus final Miſery, if the Effect and Conſequence only of final Wickedneſs, can be no more *Imperfection* or *abſolute Evil* in God's Government of rational Beings, than any preſent Miſery (which they bring upon themſelves by Vice) is; but is agreeable to the eternal unalterable Nature and Difference of Things: and there can be no other *reaſonable* End of God's *moral* Government than what the *Scripture* declares; *viz.* to *reward* or *puniſh* every rational and moral Agent *according to his Works.*

4. Various and different Species of Creatures with various and different Degrees of Perfection, do moſt illuſtrate the infinite Power and Wiſdom of the Creator; and the Obligations and Acceptance of Duty and Obedience in all rational Agents being always in Proportion to the Degrees of their Perfections, and the Exerciſe of their natural and moral Powers or Faculties in the State and Circumſtances in which Providence has placed them, God is hereby ſhewn to be equally good unto all: nor can he be ſuppoſed to make the Happineſs of any of them to depend upon their being abſolutely free from *Sin* or *Error* or *Imperfection*, becauſe it is impoſſible for them to be ſo. And as in the leaſt perfect God expects the leaſt Perfection, ſo final Happineſs, though not in equal Degree, may be, and certainly will be, the Lot of the leaſt perfect

as well as of the moſt perfect intelligent Beings or Agents: of him who received but one Talent and made good Uſe of it, as well as of him who received ten, and made good Uſe of *them*.

The Capacity of Happineſs and Miſery depends on good or bad Diſpoſitions and Habits of Virtue or Vice proceeding from them; which admit, the one of various Degrees of Perfection, the other of Imperfection. Theſe Diſpoſitions and Habits, though more or leſs influenced and promoted by the Temper and Conſtitution of the *Body*, have only their Seat and Effects properly and truly in the *Mind* or *Soul*; and ſo muſt go along with its Exiſtence when ſeparated from the Body: and then as Self-condemnation and Miſery are the natural Effects of a bad Diſpoſition and vitious Habits [as we ſee theſe always produce them here, when Men are debarred thoſe bodily Enjoyments to ſtifle the Senſe of them, which can have no Place after Death] they muſt follow them in the State after this, and continue with them; and ſo long as they continue, Miſery, which is the natural Puniſhment of them, muſt continue alſo. It is the ſame in reſpect of a good Diſpoſition and Habits of Virtue, which naturally produce Self-ſatisfaction and Happineſs; and ſo muſt produce them invariably when not interrupted by the Paſſions and Vices of evil Agents, or by bodily Imperfections. This in both Reſpects equally is agreeable to the Nature of Things, and therefore is reaſonable and fit in God's all-wiſe and good Government of the World.

It is in vain then to talk of or excuſe unreaſonable Appetites, Paſſions and Deſires, under Pretence that no Motives to Reaſon and Goodneſs can overcome or correct them; theſe are Perverſions of Nature, and *evil* in themſelves, and the Actions

flowing from them obſtruct the univerſal Good and the Happineſs of the whole rational Creation: and though God indeed by his all-wiſe Providence brings *Good* out of *Evil*, and makes ſome Men's *Vices* the Occaſion of the Encreaſe of other's *Virtues*, and ſo of their Happineſs; yet whatever is thus *evil* in itſelf, muſt, if not remedied, at laſt produce *Evil*, i. e. *Miſery* to the Agent. To prevent this Evil, the Reaſonableneſs and Happineſs of Virtue, the Admonitions of divine and humane Laws, are propoſed and inculcated as ſufficient Motives to it; if theſe will not do, *Miſery* is the proper Portion of obſtinate Sinners, and *fit* to be applied to and for ever to accompany vitious Deſires and habitual Wickedneſs.

We greatly miſtake if we diſtinguiſh the *Goodneſs* of God from the *perfect Reaſon* of his Nature, and ſuppoſe a Goodneſs to which his *Wiſdom ſhould give Way*, as you expreſs it in your laſt Letter. All the moral Attributes of God centre in and (when rightly conceived) are but the Effects or Conſequences of *perfect Reaſon*, which therefore can never poſſibly give way to any of them. If then it is agreeable to the perfect Reaſon or Wiſdom of God, that Creatures endued with *humane* Appetites and Paſſions, ſhould have Exiſtence, and their Miſery and Happineſs in Conſequence of them naturally depend on their making a right or wrong Uſe of them, both which is put in their Power; it is plainly reaſonable and fit that theſe Conſequences ſhould finally follow each of them, and continue as long as their Cauſes continue, or the Beings themſelves exiſt: and either Way the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of divine Providence may be diſplayed in the future State.

5. The Truth, I think, differently from what you alledge, is; that all God's *Works* are *wiſe* and *good*, not

not becauſe they are *neceſſary*, or as you ſay, *cannot be otherwiſe, or in another manner, or in any Reſpect different from what they are*; but becauſe out of the infinite poſſible various Syſtems of Creation conceived in the divine Mind, God has made the *beſt* and moſt *perfect* [if any abſolutely beſt and moſt perfect be in Nature] *by his perfect Power directed by perfect Wiſdom and Goodneſs*, as you very rightly obſerve; ſo that not natural *Neceſſity*, but *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, which always ſuppoſe *free Agency*, directed God's Power in the Creation, in which he preſides and interpoſes as a Governour, by the Alteration of natural Cauſes and Effects when and as he pleaſes. And though a Subordination of intelligent Beings does and probably always will ſubſiſt in every Part of the intelligent Creation; yet this does not appear to be in the leaſt neceſſary in regard to God's moral Government of the Univerſe. And I wonder you ſhould think and argue that an *Equality* (ſuppoſe amongſt Men, as you put the Caſe) of *Diſpoſitions*, *Capacities*, and *Circumſtances*, and all theſe as *good* and *perfect* as they are *capable* of being, would make (as you ſuppoſe) an *abſurd Conſtitution*, or a leſs happy State than the preſent, mixed in a Subordination with Virtue and Vice, moral Good and Evil. You aſk; *What could ſuch a Sett of Beings do? or how employ themſelves?* I anſwer; They might act and employ themſelves much better than they generally do *now*. They might and naturally would aſſociate together with the moſt *benevolent* Affections in mutual Converſation and Exerciſes both of Body and Mind; and in an uniform Worſhip of God and Obedience to his Will: In which Reſpects they would be free from all the malevolent ſelfiſh Paſſions which are the Cauſe of all the Plagues and Miſeries of this Life, as *Envy*, *Malice*, *Pride*, *Covetouſneſs*, *Injuſtice*, *Cruelty*,

Cruelty, and what is moſt unreaſonable of all, *Uncharitableneſs* and *Perſecution* in Matters of Religion; and as there would be no Place for any ſocial *Wrong* or *Evil*, ſo mutual good Inclinations and a mutual equal Love and Purſuit and Attainment of *Truth* and *Piety* with a mutual Good-will to each other, united in the ſame Intereſt and Affections, muſt render their Perſons and Converſations moſt highly agreeable to one another, with Sincerity and without Reſerve. And there being in ſuch a State no Room for *Gratitude*, *Compaſſion* and *Fortitude*, [which you make Objections againſt it] theſe being Virtues ariſing only from *Dependence* and *Imperfection*, is an Argument, not of its being a *worſe*, but on the contrary, of its being a *better* and more *happy* State than the *preſent*. For certainly as it is better and more happy for every Individual, not to be an Object of *Compaſſion* or *Want*, or to depend on others than to be ſo; it is evidently a better and more happy State where *Gratitude* and *Compaſſion*, &c. to our Fellow-creatures, which ariſe out of *Imperfection*, have no Place; and where inſtead of theſe are exerciſed mutual higheſt Gratitude to God, and moſt ſincere brotherly Affection to one another, without the Mixture of thoſe ſelfiſh Paſſions and mutual interfering of Intereſts, which you think contribute to the Harmony and Happineſs, but which I think are Diſcords and obſtruct them, and are the Source of all humane Vices and worldly Unhappineſs; which it is the Deſign and End both of divine and humane Laws to reform and amend; and which to me are a demonſtrative Argument that a future State is to ſucceed this; where theſe Imperfections and Enormities being removed, the heavenly Society (into which no defiled or unholy Perſon will be admitted) will be united by the Bands of an uniform and truly ſpiri-

tual

tual Worſhip of God, and a conſtant ready Obedience to his Will, and by mutual pure Affection and Charity to one another: the happy Effects of which will naturally be unmixed and unreſerved Delight in each other's Converſation; Communications from the Fountain of Truth and Holineſs, and mutual Endeavours not to interrupt but to promote each other's Virtue and Felicity, and Advances to greater Perfection, each in our ſeveral Stations and Degrees, for EVER.

6. In fine; What I think we chiefly differ in is; that you make God too much *paſſive* in Himſelf, or in Conſequence of his Perfections, though not without *Will* and *Agency*; and alſo ſuppoſe him too much the Cauſe, and we ourſelves too little the Cauſe of all we do. You allow Man *Will* and a Power *to act*; but then ſeem to make his *Will* and *Agency* not properly a *free Exertion* of Power in his own Mind, but a *neceſſary* Concomitant of Motives, in reſpect of which he is entirely *paſſive*. In both theſe Caſes you conſequentially diminiſh (without intending it, nay intending to advance) the Perfections and *Virtues* (if I may ſo call them) of *God*, and alſo of intelligent created humane Beings; and make ſpiritual and moral Good and Evil, Happineſs and Miſery, not ſo much the Conſequence and Effect of *voluntary* Choice, as of natural and *neceſſary* Impulſe; and to be a Part of the Conſtitution of Things unalterable and irreſiſtable by our Wills or acting Powers; and both which at laſt will naturally end and unite by the Appointment of God's Wiſdom and Goodneſs in univerſal *Good* and *Happineſs*, though not without our *Will*, *Diſpoſition* and Endeavours to promote it in ourſelves or others. In which Notion of yours you ſeem too favourable to *Vice*; and want a Foundation for this *Will* and *Diſpoſition* to Goodneſs in Minds

Minds corrupted, darkned and hardned with Habits of *Vice* and *Impiety*. I have ſhown that theſe naturally produce *Miſery* here, and naturally and certainly will do ſo hereafter, in Proportion to the Strength and Enormity of thoſe Habits. This is natural and agreeable to Reaſon and a moral Government, as well as to *Revelation*. And as the *knowing* and conſidering *theſe Terrors of the Lord*, as a righteous Judge, are a powerful Means to *perſwade* Men both to avoid them, and obtain his Favour by Virtue and Perſeverance in Well-doing; ſo we muſt take Care that in our Searches (how well meant ſoever) into the Ways and Methods of divine Providence, we do not abate or weaken thoſe Terrors which are propoſed by the Wiſdom of God himſelf, as the greateſt Diſcouragement to *Irreligion* and *Immorality*. Charitable and benevolent Affections are due to all Men, to even the worſt of Men, becauſe we know not the whole of their Caſe: but God, who knows the Hearts of all, will be determined in his Proceedings towards us by nothing but the perfect Equity of every one's Caſe; and will finally diſpenſe thoſe Rewards and Puniſhments which are *fit* and proportionate to our Doings; (every one's particular Faculties, Circumſtances and Condition being conſidered) and ſuch as are agreeable to the eternal, unchangeable Rule of *Truth*, *Right*, and *Goodneſs*. I am,

With ſincere Affection and Reſpect

Your humble Servant

FINIS.

ERRATA.

PAge 20. l. 13. dele Stop after *Exiſtence*. p. 33. l. 2. add, *Aug.* 1736. *p.* 35. *l.* 17. *r.* in God. *p.* 46. *l.* 7. *for* perfectly *r.* prop*p.* 52. *l.* 21. put a Comma after *voluntary*. p. 63. l. 29. *r.* give. *p.* *l.* 25. put a full Stop after *Will*.